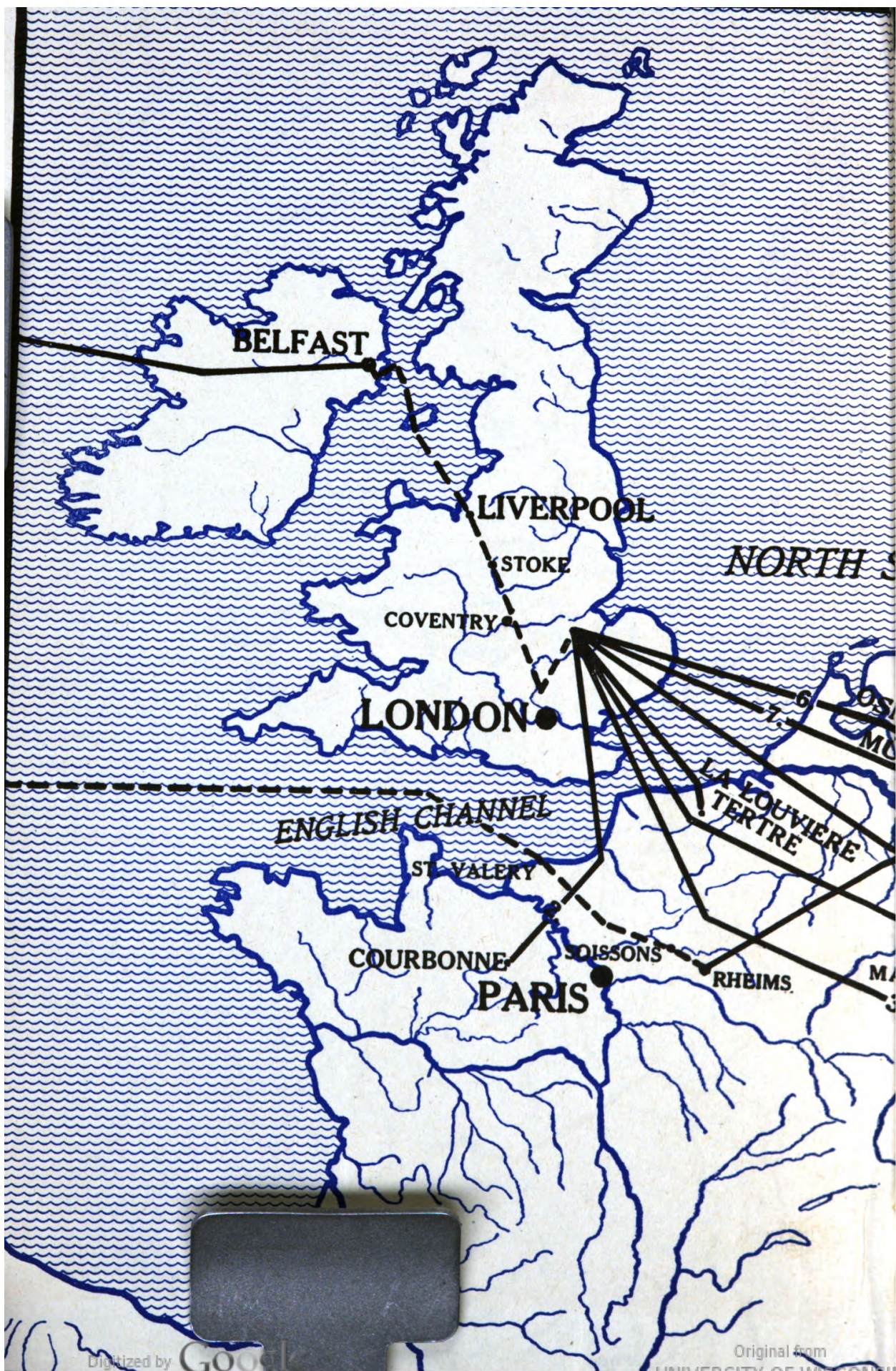


Vacation With Pay



From Operation Files
401st Bombardment Group,
612th Squadron,
Eighth Air Force

CA

BARTH
ROSTOCK STRALSUND

NEUSTRELITZ

BERLIN

BRÜCK
STER

4. MERSEBERG

EISENACH

FULDA

FRANKFURT

JZ

GEGENAU

On my fourth mission, to Merseberg,
we were shot up badly but reached England.
There No. 3 engine caught fire
and we bailed out just in time.

My seventh mission was to Münster, in the Ruhr Valley.
We were hit, caught fire, and had to bail out from
27,000 feet into enemy territory.

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VACATION WITH PAY



VACATION WITH PAY

*Being an account of my stay at
the German Rest Camp for Tired
Allied Airmen at beautiful
Barth-on-the-Baltic*

By

ALAN H. NEWCOMB



DESTINY PUBLISHERS
HAVERHILL . . . MASS.

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F09789 631316
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Dedicated to the
living memory of

ROBERT THOMAS NEWCOMB

My brother Bob

9 mar 48 Pub. 232

The author wishes to express his thanks to JOHN W. BABER for the use of photographs from his complete collection of more than 200 pictures taken at Stalag Luft 1. Copies of the collection are available by writing JOHN W. BABER, 719 S. Fourth Ave., Maywood, Illinois.

Chapter illustrations, maps and jacket by RICHMOND N. STUART.

NOTES CONCERNING THIS MANUSCRIPT

Second Lieutenant Alan H. Newcomb enlisted in 1942 in the Aviation Cadets and received training in Texas as a pilot. In the fall of 1944, Lt. Newcomb went overseas to England as a co-pilot on a B-17 crew and was attached to the 401st Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force.

On his seventh mission, he and his crew were forced to bail out from their burning airplane and he became a prisoner of the German government. He was taken through Germany to *Stalag Luft 1*, one of the largest Air Force detention camps, and was held there until the camp was liberated by Russian soldiers in May, 1945.

While Lt. Newcomb was in durance vile at *Luft 1*, situated at Barth-on-the-Baltic, he kept careful and accurate account of all the phases of prisoner of war life and of his relations with the Germans. Paper being unobtainable, this diary was written on German toilet paper, and carried on his person to escape confiscation by the Nazis.

On his return to the United States, he transcribed the diary from its original toilet paper manuscript, wrote a narrative prologue leading up to the opening entries in the diary, and a final chapter bringing his life and his reactions to the current American scene up-to-date.

The manuscript is enlivened with extracts of prisoner of war poetry, written in camp and preserved in the "log-book" assembled by Lt. Newcomb. This logbook also contains sketches and photographs of camp life and surroundings.

Part One

PRELUDE TO PRISON



CHAPTER ONE

"Pappy" Mohler rolled over in bed and cocked a reproachful eye at me.

"Ten dollars?" he protested. "Now, Newk, for why would you want ten bucks in this Newfoundland wilderness? From what I've seen of it, it's the one place where you couldn't spend a nickel if you had one."

"Experimental research, Pappy," I explained. "Mathematical probabilities—some of the boys are investigating the law of diminishing returns—"

"Or in words of one syllable," said Pappy, "you crave to sit in on a crap game. Newk, you oughta stay out of such. They get you nowhere—I should know."

Just a little late, I realized that waking your prospect for a quick touch out of a sound slumber on a frosty, cloudy day wasn't the best way to float a loan.

Lieutenant Mohler was my first pilot in the shiny new B-17 we were flying from Nebraska to England, by way of Newfoundland. I hadn't known him or the rest of the crew very long; as a matter of fact, I had been with them only a week as a replacement co-pilot. But Herb Corwin, our navigator, had assured me that Pappy was a soft-hearted *hombre* who was ready to part with ten-dollar bills on occasion, even to a new acquaintance like me.

Pappy was an interesting and colorful character. He had been, at various times, a policeman, a restaurant owner, a numbers racket man, a taxi-cab driver, and only he knows what else. He hailed from Salt Lake City, but had seen, in a somewhat checkered career, many men and many cities. Since he was twenty-nine, much older than the other fellows on our crew, he assumed a fatherly air toward us all and gave out with a great deal of free advice, some of it, I must admit, very good advice.

"How about Henry and Herbie?" he queried, "They got money."

"Herb did have, but those burglars he's playing with took him to the cleaners. Henry, I think, is doing all right."

Henry Kaczorowski was the bombardier on our crew. Pappy grunted:

"Oh, so they're in it too—."

"Yeah. Tell you what, Pappy, let me have the ten and I'll split my winnings with you," I offered generously, hoping against hope that there might be winnings.

"Oh, skip it," said Pappy. "Here's your ten. And good luck!"

The financial transaction completed, he rolled his rotund body over to the wall to shield his eyes from the semi-pseudo-sunlight that foggy Newfoundland supplies to tourists during the month of July. Clutching the ten-dollar bill in my presumably lucky left hand, I hurried across the sandy parade-ground to the barracks where the crap game was noisily progressing, providing a release from the monotonous tension of the camp.

Perhaps I should mention that the date on the calendar in the mess hall, as I had observed it that morning, was July 22nd in the warlike year of 1944. Only the week before I had been waiting around in Kearney, Nebraska, as a replacement co-pilot. For some reason, Mohler's crew had lost their co-pilot and I was introduced to the men with whom I was going to combat just three hours before we took off from Kearney. It

was a good crew and I considered myself fortunate to be one of their number. In the quick way that men who fly together automatically become fast friends, I was already "Newk" to them, and already I had a line of their varied characteristics. Pappy was easy-going, Herb downright lazy, and Henry nervously active, but they all worked together well in the plane, and I seemed to be fitting into their routine.

As I opened the door of the barracks, Herb Corwin, who was slouching against the wall observing the game, caught sight of me, and his ever-sleepy eyes brightened a little.

"Did Pappy come across?" he inquired. It was Herb who had suggested I make the touch. I nodded. Herb gestured toward the game—

"Look at Henry!" he exclaimed, "he's hot!"

Sure enough, Henry was going strong. On the blanket in front of his tense, wiry body was a pile of American and Canadian currency, and the hand that rattled the dice was going like a piston. His Flushing, New York accent rose above the hum of voices, imploring the dice to "see things his way."

"C'mon, babies," he invoked. "Everybody on? Is it taken? Hi, Newk, get on me—I'm away! C'mon babies, let's make it NATURAL!"

Silence greeted the first roll. Then with a quick jerk of his hand, a staccato clicking of the dice, and a roar from the under-shirt-clad multitude, Henry crapped out. But he bounded out of the crowd with as much cheerfulness as ever, grinning from ear to ear and still holding a fistful of bills.

"Gosh, Al, you should've been here earlier! Youse coulda made a mint while I was hot! Boy, did ya see me? I was *going!*"

The object lesson was before me!

"Gentlemen," I put in, "I have just come to a decision. What say we take this ten dollars so kindly provided by Brother Mohler, go over to the PX, and have a milkshake on me? If we stay here, I'll only be handing it over to these wolves with

dirty knees, but if we leave now I can give most of it back to Pappy."

Henry was ready to quit—he was ahead of the game; Herb was ready to quit—he was broke; so we walked down the street to the big Post Exchange, which was crowded as usual with American and British officers and enlisted men, WAC's and WAAF's, all milling around trying to get an order in to the counter girls.

While we were waiting for Henry, our go-getter, to worm his way in to the counter, several of the enlisted men on our crew came in the door and hailed us boisterously. There were Wally Littrell, the Texan gunner-engineer; Pete Keryan, the ball turret gunner, a Pennsylvanian; Don Cloutier, our tail-gunner from Illinois; and Max Stedman, a New York State man who filled the position of radio operator on the ship. Hank Smith and Pat Dunne, the two waist gunners were, so Wally said, spending the afternoon as Pappy was, "in the sack."

"Well, gosh, do youse guys want these milkshakes, or shall I throw 'em out?" Henry was back from the counter in record time with our 'shakes, and we managed to find an empty booth in which to sit down. Wally joined us.

"Ah don't think it's even wuthwhile to dive in theah for one of *those* milkshakes," he said as we sat down. "Have y'all heard th' latest?"

"No, what's happened? What is it? Are we leaving?"

Immediately we showered him with questions. Not only had we already spent three days waiting for the weather to clear, but the prospect of our 2,000 mile flight across the Atlantic was a priority subject in everyone's mind.

"We brief at fahve o'clock 'n take off sometime tonight or tomorrow mo'ning!"

That was enough. We gulped down our milkshakes and hurried back to the barracks to wake Pappy and to pack our flight bags before the scheduled briefing time. Rudely awakened, the "Old Man" heaved himself, grunting and groaning, out of his

bed and joined us in the flurry of activity that went on. A babble of voices arose.

"Gosh, they don't give you much time around here!"

"Wherein hell's my A-2 jacket?"

"If Corwin can steer us across all that water, he's a better navigator than I give him credit for."

"Hey, Pappy, don't let Newk get at that wheel—he'll drown us all!"

The barracks CQ put his head in the door—"Briefing at five o'clock sharp."

"Yes, yes, yes. Don't rush us."

"Newk, we'll take turns flying and it won't be so bad."

"I'll bet those Germans are scared stiff—yeah."

"Hey, Hoibie, how far is it to you-know-where?"

"How should I know? I ain't been briefed yet."

"My gosh, what a navigator—don't you have any interest in this thing?"

"Not much. Who's got my hat?"

The CQ again; "Briefing is in ten minutes at the Operations building. You go . . ."

"We know, we know where it is."

"All right, fellows, let's go! Come on, come on! Leave your bags here and pick 'em up after briefing. They'll probably give out with a meal before we leave, anyway."

"You're darn right they'll give us chow. Do you think I want to starve in the middle of the ocean?"

We streamed out the door and joined the rest of the two or three hundred men going down to the briefing. On Newfoundland, five o'clock means that the dusky, half-dark night has already started. The wind was rising a little, pushing at our backs and urging us toward the big gray-green Operations building. Pilots, bombardiers, and navigators crowded and jostled up the narrow staircase, wise-cracking about the flight ahead, but we all quieted down quickly as the briefing officers mounted a platform at the end of the long, drafty room.

There followed two hours of highly detailed, all-inclusive lectures and films on the best and safest way to fly an ocean, even including motion pictures of the terrain a pilot sees when approaching the Irish coast. Each pilot was issued a 200-page notebook of maps, instructions, call-letters, identification signals, everything that might possibly be needed during the trip.

Herbie's fears that he might starve in the air were considerably allayed by a hearty meal served at the officers' mess, after which we lugged our bags down to the flight line to meet the enlisted men, who also had been briefed and fed. The night was chilly and we were thankful for the warmth of the Flight Room, where hundreds of men lay sprawled among the piles of baggage, waiting to go to their ships.

During the four days our new B-17's had been here, both our crewmen and the permanently-stationed line crews had gone over them, checking every detail and seeing that the engines were running smoothly for the long hop ahead. Now all that remained was to stow the baggage in the bomb bays, run through the final flight check and we'd be ready to go.

The loudspeakers shouted out crew numbers as the ships took off at ten-minute intervals, providing a deep undertone of roaring motors to the hum of idle conversation in the room . . . ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, I, reading a Pocketbook mystery, Pappy and Herb asleep, and Henry in a voluble and seemingly senseless argument with Wally. Then our number, 999, was called, and we took our bags out to the waiting six-by-six truck. Our takeoff time was set at 2358 hours, and we had time to check the gas tanks once more, run up the engines for testing, and see that everything else was set.

When the headphones told us that it was time, we swung out on the runway, I locked the tailwheel and Pappy flicked on the generator switches and shoved the throttles full-forward. The big ship, heavily loaded, moved forward reluctantly and then lightened as it picked up speed. Dark forests of pine trees lining the runway streaked by and disappeared.

When we were airborne and I had set the throttles and RPM controls, it was time to sign off from the "Gander tower" frequency.

"Bye-bye, Nine-nine-nine, have a good time and give 'em hell!"

The tower operator must have said that to a hundred ships that evening, but he must also have known what it meant to us to leave with a friendly, unofficial goodbye in our ears, and he made it sound spontaneous and sincere.

When we were on course and out of sight of land, Pappy uttered some more welcome words: "Newk, you go on back to the bomb bays and get some sleep—no need for both of us to fly this straight and level stuff at the same time. I'll call you when I get tired."

I left my earphones on long enough to hear Herb bewailing the Army system of providing two pilots for a B-17 but only one overworked, underpaid navigator, got in a sharp reply about the relative values of the two positions, then pulled the 'phones from my head before he could answer in kind—a very effective way of getting in the last word—and went back for my nap.

The bomb bays were half-full of B-4 flight bags, mail sacks, and barracks bags, and I managed to drape myself quite comfortably over these. It was a little too soon after takeoff to be able to ignore the pulsating sound of the motors, so I lay there half awake and let my memory range back over the chain of events which had brought me from a college campus to the winged bed I now occupied.



CHAPTER TWO

To tell the truth, I had never really expected to go to combat. All the way through training I had been just an average guy, and the average ends up in combat, but it had never occurred to me that some day I was actually going out to shoot at people and have them shoot at me, both with intent to do bodily harm.

My being a pilot was in itself almost an accident. When I graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in my home town of Delaware, Ohio in the spring of 1942, I knew that I would soon be called into the Army and so went hitch-hiking down to Wright Field in Dayton to investigate the possibilities of enlisting in the Air Corps. My brother Bob, who was then a Second Lieutenant stationed in the Photographic Section at Wright, suggested that I try first to pass the Aviation Cadet examinations.

"Who, me? Why, Bob, just look at me! Six feet, one inch tall, and only 147 pounds, with farsighted and astigmatic eyes! I wouldn't get past that physical if I were a personal friend of the President's, which I am not."

But Bob kept on in his quiet, persuasive way, and at last I agreed to make an appointment for examination. It was scheduled for 6:30 the following morning, and I got up early so as to have time for the consumption of three pounds of bananas! Try eating three pounds of bananas at a sitting—they're very

filling. To my surprise, the enlisted man who was weighing candidates gave me a sly wink, and with a whispered, "You could use a pound or two," pushed the scale on over and sang out, "Newcomb: one hundred and fifty-two pounds!"

I was in! Farsighted pilots are not officially frowned upon so long as an instrument panel is not a blur to them, and my astigmatism vanished somewhere on the printed forms. I had a scare when one doctor announced I had a heart-murmur, but he listened again and decided that it was only an "echo" of my heartbeat bounding off my rear ribs.

"Son, that's amazing, as thin as you are. How did you ever get past the weighing desk?"

I smiled winningly and secretively at him, and he evidently decided I was a personal friend of the President's. Nothing more was said.

* * * * *

Five months went by and the Army seemed to have lost all interest in one of their most promising protégés. I was allowed to swear myself in to the death and then was turned away with a curt reminder that I might expect to be called any time within the next year. Thus I started the first of my many delightfully indefinite relations with the armed forces.

Filled with enthusiasm and the desire to eat regularly, I began looking for a temporary job but my very definite status as an Enlisted Reserve Cadet was not at all helpful. I finally landed a position selling shoes on a straight commission basis and spent four months convincing the manager that he might as well keep me on in spite of my shortcomings because I would be leaving soon anyway.

"Every little bit helps, you know, Mr. Rhinehardt. What if I *am* late to work and leave the floor several times a day? I'll be gone soon and, in the meantime, you'll have just that many more shoes sold."

Powerful logic, and I continued earning my daily bread until one of those War Department "Official Business" envelopes

showed up in the mail, containing orders to report to Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio, on January 6, 1943.

On a bleak, snowy day, six hundred of us entrained at Fort Hayes, to travel in great confusion and dirty shirts to San Antonio, Texas.

"All right, misters, you're not only in the Army, you're *cadets!*"

"Step along, step along, hold up your heads!"

"I want all you men to have your heads shaved at the barber-shop by six o'clock this evening."

"Roster of men who have been accepted for pilot training—shut up so you can hear your name!"

Then came three painful steps.

San Antonio Preflight School:

"You'll be so-o-o-orry!"

"Aren't you happy, Mister? Then *smile*, dammit!"

"Why are you smiling, Mister Newcomb? Wipe it off—stamp on it!"

"*Mister*, tuck in your chin, suck in your guts, arms back and down! Down, *down!* Farther, Mister, *farther!*"

"Recite the Cadet Creed—sing the Air Corps song—what sort of grades are you men making?"

"My gosh, Newk, have we actually made it?"

Primary, Curtis Field, Brady, Texas:

"Gentlemen, *this* is an airplane."

"No, no, *no*, Mister, do it this way!"

"Roster of men deficient in Navigation classes will report for night study hall."

"Did you hear that Stoll spun his instructor in from 500 feet? Yeah,—both dead."

"Gentlemen, we'll have to fly again this Sunday. Passes are cancelled."

Basic and Advanced, Blackland Field, Waco, Texas:

"You're undoubtedly the raunchiest, saddest bunch of cadets I've ever seen in my life!"

"Give it the throttle—go around again, go around!"

"Mr. Newcomb, was *that* supposed to be a slow-roll?"

"Please, *please* remember that this thing has two engines—you're supposed to use 'em both!"

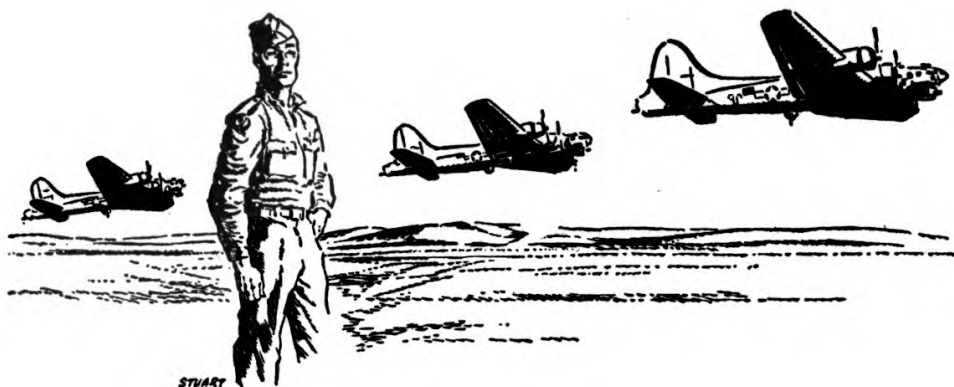
"My lord, are you trying to kill us? Hit those trim-tabs!"

"All men who have flying time to finish up will report to the line at 6:00 tomorrow morning."

"As your name is called, step to the platform, take your wings in your left hand and salute with the right!"

That summer in Texas was long and hot and I had never worked so hard before in my life. Physical training, classes, flying, the whole thing went around in one dizzy circle. A broken wrist, three days before graduation, delayed me for two reluctant months, but on January 7, 1944 I stepped aboard a train, complete with uniform, wings and flashing gold bars for my showoff leave at home. Later came the months of training at Pyote, Texas, the "Rattlesnake Air Base," and never was such a sandy, windy desert post better named. Utah, Kansas, and Nebraska, Maine, Newfoundland, and now a bomb bay bed of mail sacks.

I squirmed around to avoid a package that was digging into my ribs, the engines softened their noise into a lullaby and I fell asleep.



CHAPTER THREE

"Lieutenant, wake up! Hey, breakfast!"

"Huh?"

"Wake up! Lieutenant Mohler says you're to take over."

Max Stedman was shaking me by the shoulder and I saw that daylight was coming through the open radio room door.

"We've been on the way for six hours, sir, and Pappy's getting sleepy."

I climbed clumsily from my improvised couch and worked my way up to the cockpit. Pappy grunted, "Good-morning," and disappeared into the bomb bays. He had already set up "George," the automatic pilot, and for several hours I sat there making course adjustments as they were called up from the navigator's compartment. Below there were only clouds, with occasional glimpses of the frigid-looking water. A thoughtful mess officer had provided us with individual box-lunches and I munched on sandwiches and cookies as the Atlantic Ocean flowed by beneath us.

Twelve hours out and the massive, towering clouds that indicate land came into view up ahead. Pappy rejoined me in order to be in on the festivities and we made an instrument approach to the field at Nobbs Corners, Ireland.

A nice feature of being in the Air Corps is that no matter where you may go on this varied earth an Army airfield is al-

ways the same: the same expanse of concrete and level field, the same jeeps and GI mechanics. This affords a familiar base from which to move, a home, however impersonal, to come back to. It was so with the Nobbs Corners base. Although bordered by the miniature fields and quaint old stone farmhouses of Ireland, and enveloped by the soft, clinging fog so characteristic of the "Emerald Isle," this field was home, a small piece of America. After fourteen hours of flying, we didn't take much interest in the new surroundings on that first day; the only attractive prospect was sleep.

* * * * *

From the time we landed in Ireland, life was, for two hectic weeks, a mad scramble. As Henry remarked:

"They won't be in any hurry when we're comin' back from combat, but they coitainly rush you into it!"

We took a trip across the Irish Sea by transport, a march through blocks of incurious Liverpool streets, trains to the camp where we had, for ten days, combat-orientation lectures to the accompaniment of robot-bomb alerts, and then the final bus trip to Deenethorp, in the English Midlands.

We were assigned to the 612th Squadron, 401st Heavy Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force, entitled to wear a blue combat-patch beneath our wings, and very apprehensive about the whole thing. But that was all right—I had to attend only one briefing to discover that everyone else felt the same way; and I realized the great truth that in combat the heroes are not brave men, not the stalwart, fearless supermen that you read and hear about, but just the average, frightened guys who are nevertheless determined to do their jobs well and who actually carry on best when they are most afraid.

According to custom, I stayed behind on my crew's first mission, to Peenemunde, and an experienced combat pilot flew in my position to help out in any unaccustomed emergency. For ten long hours I sat and waited for the sound of motors bring-

ing them back. My crewmates came trooping into the Quonset hut, highly excited and full of their news:

"Gosh, Al, is that *something*! You should see 'em form on the coast—you fly along, see, and all of a sudden, here comes the whole Eighth Air Force, from every direction, hundreds of 'em, as far as you can see!"

But my curiosity was about something else.

"How's the flak?" I asked. Henry was still talking.

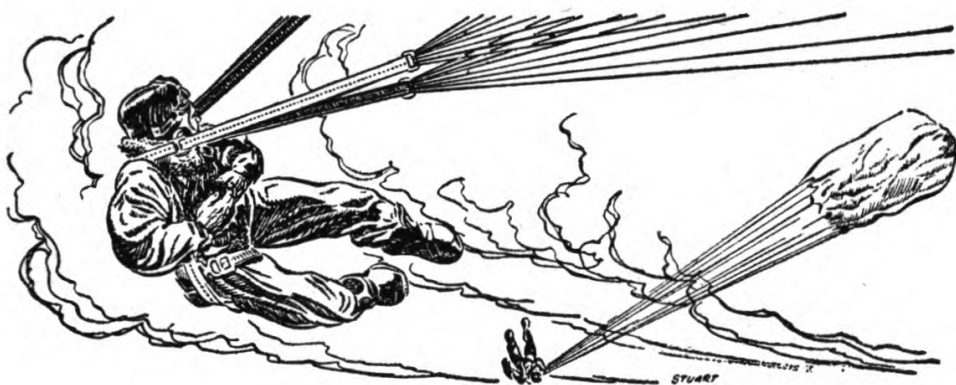
"Aw, it ain't bad. We caught some going over Denmark, and there was a scad of it at the target, but it just pops out there, and you don't even notice it—it ain't bad."

Pappy gave me a slow wink and dropped onto his bed.

"You'll find out damn soon, Newk," he said. "We're scheduled again for tomorrow."

So the next day, I went for my baptism of fire to La Louviere Tertre, Belgium and, after a day of rest, to Courbonne, France. Each night the "Stand By" sign stood in the orderly room window and each morning we arose at 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. for briefing. Many missions were called off before we left the ground, some before we reached enemy territory, and often we were unable to leave our base and join the others because of weather conditions. I hadn't realized in my previous training how many false starts were necessary before conditions allowed the completion of an accredited mission.

The next week saw us going to Gegenau, Germany, a rough target, and I saw two ships explode in mid-air. I made a quick and thorough revision of Henry's judgment on the efficiency of flak and developed my vague fears into a healthy respect for it. Justification was not long in coming.



CHAPTER FOUR

Our next strike was made on the aircraft engine plants at Merseberg, Germany, deep in enemy territory. We spent a half-hour under intense fire and received our full share of battle-damage, but were able to stay in formation until we were over England once more.

There, while flying at an altitude of 1200 feet, our No. 3 engine burst into flames. Apparently an oil line had been sheared in two, and oil covered the engine and wing. For the first time I realized the value of the Army's constant, repetitive training. Paralyzed as my brain was by the sudden, numbing fear that gripped me, I automatically cut the engine out, turned the fire-extinguisher to the No. 3 notch, and pulled both extinguishers. Pappy, setting up the automatic pilot, was calling to the crew to stand by for parachutes. Both of us could see that there was no hope of saving the ship. The fire was so intensely hot that it had melted the engine cowlings and wing surface and was burning into the vapor-filled gas tanks. Pappy gave the order:

"Bail out! Go ahead, Newk!" and rang the "Abandon Ship" alarm.

As I started from my seat there came to me the awful, sinking realization that I was without a parachute. For greater comfort I had slipped out of it after reaching the English coast.

Hurriedly I sprang back into the seat and struggled into the harness while the fire, three feet from my face, spread voraciously through the wing. Ready at last, I leapt to the catwalk and tumbled through the escape hatch right on Henry's heels.

The wind snatched me away from the ship, banging my ankles against the side of the opening, and I pulled frantically on my ripcord handle. For several awful seconds, nothing happened and I had the panic-stricken thought that the parachute had failed. Then there was a terrific jerk as the harness tightened, seeming to compress my body beyond endurance, and all at once I was swinging gently in the air, looking down at the English fields. They looked quite stationary and remote, and I peered over my shoulder to see two other parachutes swaying through the air. I called at the top of my voice:

"Henry?"

Although the parachutes appeared to be close to me, I could hear no answer. I felt entirely isolated not only from them but from the entire world. The only sound was the soft sighing of the wind past my cheek and I began to enjoy the sensation of timelessly drifting.

Then with breath-taking suddenness the ground rushed up at me and I hit with a sharp impact on my heels. Unable to control my fall, I was thrown on my back in the pasture to which the parachute had brought me. Somewhat stunned, I lay there for a moment, clearing my head and collecting my senses. Then, as I sat up and disconnected the harness, I noticed an old English farmer and a boy running toward me. Disregarding them, I jumped to my feet and strained my eyes after the plane, counting parachutes.

"One, two, three, four . . ."

"Did ye 'ave a good trip down?"

Almost unable to believe my ears, I turned and gave the grinning farmer a wondering look. He started in on another foolish question but I rudely interrupted to beg:

"How many parachutes did you see?"

"Hoi didn't look vurry close—there must 'ave been foive er six. Yer ship's on foire, eh?"

Someone was calling to us from the adjoining field. With a glow of relief, I turned to greet Henry, Herb and Wally, who were trudging along with parachutes bundled in their arms. Wally came up, grinning broadly.

"Is this yore hat? It has yore name in it—'Lieutenant Newcomb'!"

By an odd coincidence, my hat, which was of course blown off by the wind when I jumped from the ship, had landed right beside Wally. I put it on and we started off in the direction of a little town which we could see across the fields. The old English farmer trotted along beside us, still asking his impossible questions:

"D'ye jump often, Leftenant?"

"Ow long wull yer ship fly?"

In the village they told us that one of our number was lying in a field down the road, with his leg broken. We hurried to the place indicated and found Pappy lying propped on his wadded-up parachute, surrounded by solicitous English ladies who were trying to feed him tea, chocolate and crackers. Pappy was in too much pain to be polite and he motioned to me desperately.

"For Heaven's sake, Newk, get these women away," he whispered. "I don't want any damned tea; I want a doctor!"

The situation was so comical that I almost wanted time out to laugh, but Pappy was suffering badly so I went racing back to the village to telephone our base. There I met an ambulance and a jeep coming out from a nearby Army post to look for us. I directed them over to Pappy's field and he was taken in hand by the doctor. The rest of us obligingly drank the tea and chocolate so thoughtfully provided by the kindly English women.

Within an hour we knew that every one of the men had

parachuted safely, and that the airplane had blown up and crashed about ten miles away.

Apparently the alarm signal-wires were shot in two, as the crewmen in the rear of the ship had received no "bail-out" warning. One of them happened to peer through the bomb bays and saw us going, so he gave the alarm back there. All had taken their harnesses off because we were so near to landing at the base and, now that it was all over, we had a good laugh at the furious scramble made for parachutes. In spite of that panic-stricken fight to put mine on, I found that I too could laugh now. Together we made a solemn vow to keep our 'chutes on and buckled until the wheels of the ship were safely on the ground.

Our regular ship, "*Diana*," was out of commission in the battle-damage shop and we had been flying a group-lead ship called "*Fearless Fosdick*." When I went to Headquarters to make my report on its loss, I found that Colonel Seawell, the Air Exec, was greatly upset. It seems that "*Fearless*" was his favorite ship! He gave me a real quizzing to determine that it was through no fault of ours that she was destroyed. Then the crew was given a medical check to make sure that Pappy was the only casualty, after which we returned to the squadron area.

As Henry, Herb and I walked into the hut, the usual quiet after-mission activities were going on; some were reading, others talking lazily, and a few were playing cards. At the sound of the opening door and the sight of our faces, all went deathly still as heads turned, one by one, and mouths fell open. I shall never forget those blank expressions, the hand of one man, poised as he was about to drop a card, stopped in mid-air.

Then the tension broke and a surge of voices and men came forward, surrounding us with eager questions. They had heard that our ship caught fire and blew up before any parachutes could open below. We were presumed to be dead and our names silently crowded out of their conversation. It was heart-warming to see the relief and solicitude in each one's face, but

thinking of going to bed there was useless until the story of how it feels to bail out of a "flamer" had been told a hundred times. I learned how various are the virtues of fame before I was allowed to lie down and go to sleep.

Since our first pilot was now indefinitely laid up in the hospital, and all of us were nervous and rather shaken up after that experience, the Flight Surgeon offered us an opportunity to spend a week in a Flak Home for "rehabilitation and rest." With some discussion, and the knowledge that we might need that interval in a rest camp much more later on, we settled for a five-day leave. This was granted and we joyously prepared to set out.

"Just think," Corwin crowed, "we don't care whether it's Stand By, Stand Down, or Stand-on-your-head, for five days! London, here I come! Are you guys coming with me, or do I tear that town apart all by myself?"

"In to the death, Herbie, in to the death," I assured him.

"Going anywhere with youse guys, that's prob'ly where I'll end up," mourned Henry, "but lead on. London can't be much compared to New York, but I'll take a look at it."



CHAPTER FIVE

It was after midnight when our train pulled into Victoria Station and, as soon as we left its dimly-lighted interior, we walked through pitch-black streets. Unfamiliar with the city blackout, we found ourselves continually bumping into annoyed pedestrians and stumbling into unexpected curbs and lamp posts. So a system was evolved whereby we walked in single file, hands on one another's shoulders, and only the first man in line took the bruising and complaints. From the owner of a voice proclaiming,

"Good 'ot meat pies, meat pies an' cawfee 'ere!" we learned the general direction of the nearest Red Cross billet, eventually arriving at Jules' Club, on Jermyn Street, off Picadilly Circus. As always, food and sleep held first priority and we satisfied both these requirements thoroughly, luxuriating in the thought that no one would wake us up.

London seen by daylight was big, crowded, and full of interesting people, shops, public buildings and monuments. Herb dashed out after breakfast with a warning to us to wait for him, but although we did wait for a long time and later checked back at the Club, he was swallowed by the city all day. After a time, Henry and I gave up our vigil and went out to become acquainted with London. After wandering around the Picadilly section near us, we finally grew tired, joined a bus tour, and

were taken to all the points of interest usually visited by tourists. In the evening we conducted a comparative study of the many public houses—"pubs" to us old Londoners—in our vicinity.

Again, the next day Herb disappeared after breakfast, but this time we merely consigned him to the care of anyone able to keep up with him and we set out to see the Tower of London. Knowing that it was situated on the Thames River, we reasoned that if we walked long enough in the right direction, we were certain to arrive there. A walk along the Thames from Picadilly Circus to the Tower of London is, I am prepared to state, a long trip. We went the length of the Victoria Embankment and then descended into a series of odoriferous, winding streets.

"Gosh, Al," sniffed Henry, "they must have all the fish in the world down here! Phew! And *what is that* smell?"

After careful analysis, we decided that it was a special, high-powered combination of a tannery and a fish and chips shop, standing side by side.

Two hours of walking brought us to a bridge where we could see, seemingly miles away, the grey stone walls of the Tower. Deciding that enough is enough, Henry hailed one of London's cabbies and we rode the rest of the way to our afternoon in another, older world.

Henry was tired that evening, so I left him in our room while I went out to a dance sponsored by the English Community House "for servicemen of all nations." I reached the dance floor, looked over the couples there, and right away I knew how the rest of my leave would be spent. Over the shoulder of an American medical major, I saw a pair of hazel eyes and a fresh, sweetly appealing face, and I descended on the couple with all the Air Force aplomb I could muster.

Barbara, I discovered, although dressed at the time in civilian clothes, was an officer in the WRENS, the British Women's Naval Service, and home on leave from her post in Scotland.

An hour's talk, managed by some excellent evasive maneuvering against the Army Medical Corps, convinced me that she was even more fascinating and intelligent than I had guessed from that first glimpse, and from then on the entertainment provided "for servicemen of all nations" received no attention from me.

We went dancing; we took a Sunday stroll through St. James Park and along the Serpentine; we went ("Gosh, Al, I never see you any more—I'm going back to the base!") to a ballet performance of "Coppelia." We had a Devon-cider drinking contest at the Berkeley Grill; we sipped tea with her family at home—and I woke up to the fact that my leave was over.

Of course, we promised to write to each other and I made plans to spend my next leave in Glasgow, near her station, but it was a sad Second Lieutenant who made his way home on the bumping little British trains. My recent escape from death had placed me in the frame of mind so common to men in combat:

"Enjoy this present moment—you may never know another one like it! Think about what you're doing—it may be the last time. Take a full measure of life from everything you do, taste each morsel of food, roll your words on your tongue—the chance may never come again!"

In this mood of uncertainty, I even envied Pappy, lying there secure for the moment in his hospital bed. Henry and I went to see him the day after our leave was finished. His leg was still painful, but it had been well set and before him now stretched several months of idleness in recovery.

We were now more or less an extra crew, since the first pilot was out of action. The Squadron Commander called me to his office and discussed the possibility of putting me in command of the crew, but said he would rather have me fly a few more missions first, and I agreed to do so. So I flew Numbers Four and Five with other crews as a replacement pilot. We went to Frankfurt and to Osnabruck, and the ships in which I was

flying sustained only minor damage. I began to settle down a little, to learn the necessary fatalistic attitude.

"All right, they're firing at you—so what? Either you get hit or you don't. If you don't, you get through and go home; if you do, what's the use of worrying until it happens?

"Not only that, there are a lot more fellows here in the same boat that you are. Why should you be immune, or be any better off than they? Maybe this is the point your life has been building up to. Maybe you're *supposed* to get it now. Don't worry, it's not your business—let God take care of it in His own way."

In the last week of September, my crew was given a new pilot. Tom Davis was his name and his home was in Oneida, New York. We went for two or three local hops to become accustomed to each other's ways of doing things and on one mission we flew as a spare ship, turning back at the Belgian coast when sure that no replacements were needed.

Tom moved into our barracks on the 29th of September and, when he was settled, he and I planned to go into a nearby town for the evening. Just as the sun went down, the Stand By sign went up in the Orderly Room window, so we decided to stay at home and get some sleep for the next day's mission. I started to write my first letter to Barbara, but, feeling confused and distracted, I threw my penned efforts into the wastebasket and went to bed. Too bad that was, because as it turned out it was to be a long time before she had any word from me.

Henry, already in bed, propped himself on one elbow to say,

"Al, what d'ya want to bet tomorrow's a tough one?"

"No, Henry, it's going to be a milk-run, a snap. Go to sleep and don't bother me—two o'clock is mighty early."

Part Two

KRIEGIE DIARY

“And, Lo, upon a certain day, whilst
that I did journey in a marvellous engine,
wond’rously and artificially wrought, it
came to pass that I did descend unto
the land of Jerri, among the people called
Hun, that some do name Heinie. And of
their manners and customs and in what
wise they did unto me, I have made true
record, and set it down in this fair book
that all men may it read. . . .”

Unknown P.O.M.



CHAPTER SIX

October 7, 1944 Now that we have at least some sort of paper again, even though it is only German toilet paper, I am sitting down to catch up on my diary, which was rudely interrupted as of September 30th.

I am in Wetzlar, Germany at a transient camp for airmen shot down over Germany and for men captured in the front lines. I arrived here in a group of two hundred men yesterday afternoon and last night had my first real meal in a week. Henry, the bombardier, and Tom Davis, my first pilot, are with me. I don't know where the others are. Max was badly wounded and Herb broke his ankle, so I am hoping they are in a hospital by this time. I might as well go back to September 30th and proceed in some kind of order.

Back at the base in Deenethorp, England, we were awakened by the CQ at 2:30 A.M. for another mission. It was biting cold and we did a lot of shivering while getting out to the crew trucks and being carried down to the Combat Mess for breakfast. Herbie stayed in bed until the last minute, making us late, so we were the last crew finished and almost missed briefing. It was scheduled for 4:00 A.M. and we reached the hut in Operations Area just before the M.P.'s locked the doors.

As the map screen dropped, we saw that the red route line went over the Zuider Zee to Münster, in the Ruhr Valley. It

doesn't have a very good reputation and I joined feelingly in the concerted groan that went up from the benches.

Flak was reported as "heavy to intense," but we were given a good tail wind and it was only an eight-hour mission.

We were slated to lead the low element, lead squadron. "Hit the Initial Point at 12:00, the target at 12:20," which was too long a bomb run to suit me.

This was the crew's first mission with Tom as pilot. We had flown "spare" time with him once before but weren't needed and turned back at the enemy coast. Incidentally, just the day before this last raid, I went to visit Pappy Mohler, our old pilot, who broke his leg when we bailed out over England on the way home from Merseberg.

Well, to get on with it, we had "Stations" at the ship from five to six o'clock—were assigned *Pakawallup II*, an old clunker belonging to the 613th Squadron. Our own ship, *Diana, Queen of the Chase*, was still in the repair shop. As usual, the clear sky disappeared with the coming of dawn and there was a heavy mist. It was too thick to take off in so the take-off time was set ahead two hours.

Sitting here, I think I shall never forget the crew chief on that ship. He was a jolly, red-cheeked old boy, all excited over his visit from Marlene Dietrich, the movie actress. She had been out on the line the day before, climbing all around through *Pakawallup II* and sitting in all the seats. He seemed to have no doubts that his ship would come back all right—probably a mental habit, for she looked like she'd been flying since World War One! I wonder if he is still as jolly now that she is furnishing the Jerries with scrap metal?

The group finally got into the air and assembled at the usual buncher beacon. We started climbing to altitude and joined the rest of the Eighth at 18,000 over the Wash, on the English coast. Went in over Holland at 22,000 and right on up to bombing altitude, 28,000.

There was a complete undercast from the time we hit the

Channel on in, so the flak over Holland was inaccurate enough to be laughable. Our group was on time and hit the I.P. to start the bomb run at noon. The target was the marshalling yards in Münster, and we must have been the first ones over there, because there were no earlier flak clouds.

About a minute before "Bombs Away" the stuff exploded all around us—I think they must have been saving up! Immediately there was a series of heavy shudders through the ship and she bounced heavily in the air, while the whole fuselage clanged and groaned with the sound of ripping metal.

Max, the radio operator, started screaming over the interphone, "Dear God, come and help me! I'm hit! Come and help me!"

Tom and I were both yelling at him to shut up so that we could use the interphone to ascertain the damage. I learned later that Pete Keryan, the ball-turret operator, climbed out just ahead of a burst which riddled his turret and went up to Max, who was almost minus a hand and was suffering from anoxia due to his loosened oxygen mask. Max was delirious and tried to fight him off, so Pete clipped him on the jaw to keep him quiet while he put a pressure bandage on the wrist to stop the flow of blood.

We stayed in formation long enough to get our bombs on the target. As the group was turning off the target, I switched over to the Bomber Channel on my radio and heard Stein, the co-pilot in our left-wing ship, calling me frantically—"Fire, Newcomb! Fire in your Tokyos!" I yelled "Roger!" at him and switched back to the interphone just in time to hear the waist gunner babbling about the fire. It was in the Tokyo emergency gas tanks at the end of the left wing and couldn't as yet be seen from the cockpit.

In the meantime I was trying to control the engine manifold pressures and bring them into some sort of alignment. Number Three supercharger had run away and was registering 60 inches

pressure, while Number Two had apparently been shot out and was giving us only 24 inches.

The bad news was coming in over the interphone. A direct hit on the radio room had wounded Max. A hit under the left wing had started the fire, riddled the main tanks on that side, and broken the main spar at the inside end of the aileron—the left wing tip was sticking up at an angle already. A burst had gone through the waist and left a big hole, but the gunner there was not hit. And a burst had let go right in front of the nose, knocking out the plexi-glass and sprinkling Henry with fragments! Luckily, he had fallen over backwards and was not wounded. Herb Corwin's mike cords were shot away and he could no longer talk to us.

Tom and I decided to leave formation so that if she blew up we wouldn't harm our wingmen. I dropped the wheels down so the Jerry fighters, if there were any around, would know we didn't have a fight in us. As we dived out of formation, a very lonely feeling came over me, as I imagine it did to the others. That formation seemed like home and we were going out into the cold, cruel world!

While I worked away at the superchargers, Tom tried to slip the fire out and to dive and jerk off the loose wing tip with the fire in it. We could now see the flames as they worked their way toward us. Although the wing was now canted at an even greater angle, it showed no signs of obliging us by tearing off. The memory of that Merseberg mission when we caught fire and barely got out in time before she blew up was still with me. To tell the truth, I was scared stiff and was praying constantly and feverishly. I knew the crew, who had been with me then, were feeling the same way, so I pressed the interphone button and said, as casually as I could, "Tom, hadn't we better be departing?"

He was of the same mind. There was obviously nothing more we could do. With that fire spreading so rapidly, it might be only a matter of seconds before the main tanks exploded, so

Tom gave the word to bail out. The crew check-answered in record time, but still in order; tail gunner, waist, ball, radio and bombardier.

I prepared to leave, unhooking my mike and 'phone cords and skinning out of my flak suit. While I held us on course, Tom set up the auto-pilot. I tapped him on the shoulder, pointed enquiringly at myself, he nodded, and in three seconds I had taken a deep breath, disconnected my oxygen hose, dropped to my knees on the catwalk, and gone out head first.

Immediately there was a great stillness. My ears having been accustomed for so many hours to the roar of our motors, it now felt as though I had suddenly lost my hearing.

There was a wind one hundred miles in velocity at that height and I could sense it rushing past my ears as, still holding my breath, I cartwheeled through space. I stiffened my body, stopped cartwheeling and could, for a moment, see our stricken ship diving away and the formation, barely in sight, miles ahead of it. Then it was lost from view, leaving me to wonder if Tom had escaped.

I had forgotten to count the seconds and had no idea how far I had fallen toward earth, but I could no longer hold my breath, so I gulped a great mouthful of the icy-cold air. It was breathable but still thin, so I estimated my height as about 15,000 feet. I had fallen about ten thousand and didn't want to pull the ripcord until I reached three or four thousand, but the undercast was approaching rapidly. I didn't want to fall free through that, because it might have extended clear to the ground, so just before entering the clouds, I pulled the ripcord. The parachute worked perfectly; a sudden all-over jerk, then I started swaying back and forth in the gusty wind. The clouds rifted apart as I dropped through them and I went down through a small hole, trying all the while to stop my swaying by pulling on the lines.

When I emerged from the clouds at about five thousand feet, I could see a rather large city toward which I appeared to be

dropping, so I slipped air from my 'chute until I was sure I would miss. I was afraid that it might be Münster and I didn't want to meet those people right after they had been bombed—they were probably more than a little angry.

The absurd thought came to me that when I landed the Germans might take away the Hershey bar I had in my pocket! Foolish as it may seem now, I tugged it out and crammed it into my mouth. Why that seemed important at the time, I don't know—at any rate, my mouth was too dry to swallow, so I choked and spit it out again. Utterly exhausted by my efforts with the shroud lines, I hung limply in the harness and stared fixedly at the fields below—enemy country. It didn't look unfriendly. There was a feeling of unreality about the whole thing, as though I were having a nightmare and knew that I would soon wake up.

Suddenly the ground that had looked so stationary and so far away came rushing up to meet me. Before I had time to prepare myself, I lit in a plowed field, falling flat on my back. I was dazed by the impact and it took me a minute to sit up and for my head to clear. An ancient farmer walking the edge of my field turned to look at me and stood there muttering to himself—no danger there!

All at once I remembered my GI shoes which were tied to my harness and quickly began fumbling at them with numb hands, putting them on in place of my bulky flying boots. The idea of escape had just penetrated my confused mind and as soon as my shoes were on I jumped up, only to see guns trained from three different directions as three soldiers converged on me. Behind the soldiers were several gaping civilians, and soon a ring of curious faces was formed around me.

"*Amerikanisch?*" asked one of the soldiers. I nodded my head.

"*Bomber?*" I nodded again, then belatedly recalled that I wasn't supposed to answer that question.

"*Sprechen Sie Deutsch?*"

"Ja, ein Bisschen," I muttered meekly.

"Kommen Sie!"

The soldier jerked his head to indicate that I was to follow him and started for the edge of the field. The other two soldiers formed behind me and the civilians trailed behind them. Since they wore blue uniforms, I decided that the soldiers were Luftwaffe men.

In a road two fields over, we met a crowd of civilians headed by a resplendent figure in a green uniform. Later I learned that this man was the mayor—and also the jailer—of Nordwalde, the nearest town. Some others now came up guarding Henry, who looked white and shaken. I suppose I did too. We had heard too much concerning the Germans' attitude and there was hatred in the glances of these people.

As we started off down the road, some young boys came up carrying my parachute, Mae West, boots, mask, helmet and goggles. They piled it all in my arms and it made an unwieldy load. Henry appeared to be having trouble with his and I offered to take some of it from him, but he protested vigorously:

"Naw, naw—I can manage."

After less than a mile's walk we came to a small town, Nordwalde-bei-Münster. The streets were lined with people who spat at us as we passed, screaming what were no doubt very nasty names—my German didn't extend that far. But I did understand a very unpleasant gesture which some of them made, a throat-cutting motion with finger at throat, something we were to see many times.

In the center of Nordwalde we came to a large brick building which was evidently the town hall and jail. Henry and I were shoved into a room furnished with a big wooden trestle on which were three hard mattresses. We threw ourselves down, too tired even to talk.

After two or three hours we heard a noise in the hall outside, the door was thrown open, and in came Djmal, the waist gunner, supporting Herb and Max. Max was, as we knew,

wounded in the arm, and Herb had broken his ankle in landing. Nevertheless, his captors had made him walk until he could no longer stand. Henry and I got busy and made them as comfortable as we could on the mattresses. Max had three cigarettes, one of which we all gratefully smoked by passing it from hand to hand. Mine were snatched from me by a civilian.

Not long afterwards, the door was unlocked again and three strangers were led in and dropped to the floor. They were men from a B-24 crew, all so badly burned around the face and hands that they couldn't see nor feel. We laid them on the beds and Henry and I sat on the floor while we listened to their story, mumbled through split and swollen lips. All the space forward of the bomb bays in their plane was on fire and they were forced to go out through it! We in our ship were really very lucky.

Again the door was opened and several soldiers came in to give us all a thorough search. Fortunately they missed my finger-nail file and a pencil stub, and later I hid these in my pant-cuff. Henry persuaded me to ask in my indifferent German if he might not be allowed to keep his pipe and tobacco—but when the soldier understood what he wanted, he became furious and spouted a long tirade I couldn't understand very well, about the women and children we had killed, and then struck me in the face. When he socked me I fell to the floor and deemed it best to stay there. He went away muttering angrily. When he was out of sight I called another one of the guards to the door and talked him into sending for a doctor to tend the burned and wounded men.

The doctor, a doddering old man, came in after dusk. He spread some ointment on the burns and wrapped Herb's ankle in paper bandages. Max, he said, was all right—Pete did a good job in cutting off the flow of blood, but I am afraid that Max may lose his hand.

Thinking a little wistfully of food, we settled down for the night, Henry and I sleeping on the floor, wrapped in our para-

chutes. It was raining softly outside and I went to sleep quickly.

ODE TO A P-38

Oh, Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal,
And Madeleine Carroll, too—
But you'll find, if you query,
A much different theory
Among any bomber crew;
For the loveliest thing
Of which we could sing
This side of the Heavenly Gates,
Is no blonde or brunette
Of the Hollywood set,
But an escort of P-38's!

In the days that have passed
When the tables were massed
With glasses of Scotch and champagne,
It's quite true, that sight
Was a thing to delight
Us, intent on "feeling no pain";
But no longer the same—
Nowadays, in this game,
As we sail o'er the Dover Straits,
You may have all that wine,
Every time—just make mine
An escort of P-38's!

Byron, Shelley, and Keats
Ran a dozen dead heats
Describing the view from the hills;
Of the valleys in May,
When the winds gently sway
An army of bright daffodils.
Take your daffodils, Byron,
The wild flowers, Shelley,
Yours is the myrtle, friend Keats—
Just reserve me those cuties,
Those American beauties,
An escort of P-38's!

Sure, we're braver than hell;
On the ground, all is swell—
In the air, it's a much different story.
As we sweat out our track
Through the fighters and flak,
We're willing to split up the glory.
Well, they wouldn't reject us,
So Heaven protect us,
And until all the shooting abates,
Give me courage to fight 'em,
And just one more item—
An escort of P-38's!

Unknown P.O.W.



CHAPTER SEVEN

October 8, 1944 We have just had our breakfast of coffee and bread, so I'm ready to go on again. The bread here in Germany is very poor, hard as a rock on the outside, black and doughy on the inside. But although it has a terrible taste, still it's nourishment, and good for that reason alone.

The morning of October 1st, the jailer's wife brought us some bread spread with nauseating artificial sausage and some German coffee, which is worse than no coffee at all, and told us to hide it if her husband came in. I couldn't get the others to take more than a mouthful but Henry and I ate as much as we could stand. We all smoked the second of Max's cigarettes and then sat around in a silent stupor until the guards came and ordered us out. Henry and I, being able-bodied, made two trips, helping the others out to a waiting truck.

It seemed that all of Nordwalde had come to watch our departure, for there was a large crowd standing there in the rain. The fellows with burns and Herb with his ankle still untended were in extreme pain, and at sight of their agonized faces the muttering and angry growling from the Germans died down and they merely looked on curiously as we loaded everyone into the truck. Luckily it was covered over with a tarpaulin and straw, provided for the recent transportation of cows, still lay

on the bed. Two guards put chairs in the open end and sat down facing us, with their guns lying in their laps.

The truck we were in was a peculiar contraption. I remember Father's talking about an old White steam car that he used to chauffer when he was a young man, and I was immediately reminded of that story when our truck started up. There was a big boiler right behind the cab, and the driver stoked this with some kind of vile-smelling fuel. The gears were meshed and away we went in a dense cloud of smoke, puffing and snorting just like a steam engine and making about ten or fifteen miles an hour.

After we had been riding for awhile I tried to learn our destination from the guards, but with no success. Max brought out his last cigarette for us to smoke. The older guard almost broke our hearts by signing to us to throw it away, but the other, a more kindly soul, persuaded his companion to let us keep it. I felt a very warm glow in my heart toward that German—I hope he doesn't get killed in this war.

At first our journey led us through a pleasant countryside, dotted with weatherbeaten roadside shrines. Then the scenery changed abruptly, for within half an hour we came into Münster itself. We had evidently done a good job of bombing the day before and the people of Münster were mad about the whole thing. They gathered along the street—that is, along what was left of the street—and made unpleasant noises. But we soon reached the airfield of Handorf-bei-Münster and were dropped in front of a big administration building.

While we were waiting there in the rain, a formation of other prisoners came by, and one of them called out to us. It was Pete Keryan. Wally Littrell was in the same bunch, so I knew that two more of our crew were all right. Guards came up to us and took the wounded and burned men away to the hospital, so they said, and Henry and I said goodbye to Max and Herb. I hope that they are getting better treatment than they had that first night.

We were taken in singly, Henry, Djmal and I to be interrogated and searched by a prissy little interpreter who spotted my watch and at once took it away from me. I had saved it from previous searchings by having it shoved up my arm under the sleeve. He gave me an official receipt from *Das Reich*, which is a good laugh. I can see Hitler handing over my watch at the end of the war with thanks and a big smile!

The hall of the building had a huge spot-lighted picture of Hitler looking like Sir Galahad and our eager guards "heiled" the thing as they passed in and out. Well, I'd rather be an American, even in this undesirable position, than one of these Jerries—they can have Hitler, even looking like Sir Galahad.

As soon as the rest came through the mill, we were taken over to the local guardhouse and locked in solitary rooms. My room had a high little barred window and a shelf for sleeping. I lay on my shelf until four o'clock, at which time a most welcome meal appeared. The jailer came around with an idiot Italian boy, a slave laborer, and stood by while the boy poured some soup for me out of a big bucket. The Man With The Keys was affable enough and allowed Henry and Djmal to come and sit in my room while we ate. Djmal was still not hungry enough to stomach the soup, so I gladly ate his also, telling him between spoonfuls how foolish it was not to get all the nourishment possible. I think that by the time it was all gone I had almost changed his mind!

We spent several days, until the morning of the 5th, just lying there in solitary confinement. In the morning we were fed a slice of black bread and a cup of *ersatz* coffee, and in the afternoon we had a bowl of soup or a bowl of potatoes with *ersatz* gravy. Once in awhile we were allowed to meet in the latrine where we could talk for a few moments, but most of the time was spent in lying on that wooden shelf. By this time I was becoming noticeably dirty and my beard was starting to tickle, but I had no soap, towel or razor.

On the third day my door was opened late at night and there

stood a guard with Tom Davis! He looked rather bedraggled but was quite all right. We shook hands and pretended to be meeting one another for the first time, but I don't think the guard was fooled at all. He let Tom come in and talk with me for a few minutes before taking him to a cell. Tom told me that when he bailed out he came down on the other side of the Rhine, where he had to fight off two farmers who attacked him with pitchforks. He ran for it for several hours but finally was surrounded by Wehrmacht soldiers and captured. They took him to a Luftwaffe field and the pilots there wined and dined him royally the first evening.

The next morning we were joined by Don Cloutier, the tail gunner, who had landed in a forest and hidden himself. He travelled for three days, but was captured in making an attempt to get food and shoes from a farmhouse. So we now have staying in the jail, five men from our crew and four from the B-24 crew who were shot down at the same place we were. And I have now seen, at one time or another, all the men from *Pakarwallup II*. The four B-24 boys are the only survivors of their ship.

In the room next to mine there was a *Feldwebel* (sergeant) who was jailed for going AWOL to see his wife and son in Berlin. The jailer allowed him to carry a set of keys and let us out for the latrine, and when the boss was not around he often came into my room to talk, so my ability to speak German brought me company. This chap's name was Ernst Heuck and he was a radio operator on the night fighter-bombers which are based at Handorf. Like all airmen, he didn't seem to care whom he made friends with and we struck up a cordial armed friendship.

I still wonder if he may not have been a "plant" put in our jail to get information for the authorities. I managed, by pretending ignorance of the words he used in leading questions, to avoid talking about myself or our Army, but had a lot of fun in trying out my German on other subjects. Ernst gave me a

Polish cigarette each afternoon after my meal and once brought me an apple and a piece of bread spread with pork fat, so whether or not he was bona fide, he has my adoring gratitude. He took great delight in ordering the little doltish Italian around and didn't seem to be at all bothered by being in the jug himself. The third day I was there, he came in and told me that his pilot and plane had been shot down the night before. He didn't seem to care much about that either.

A nasty little Jerry captain who apparently had nothing to occupy his mind formed the habit of coming into my cell each evening and making me stand at attention while he interrogated me in very uncertain English.

"You have—ja, de bomber, 'Bay-seventeen'—thees shep, how—how much bomb, eh? You—carry how much, eh?", and many other painfully phrased questions asked with a sneering smile which the men serving under him must have hated as much as I did.

Then he would try to damage my morale by stammering out news of great German victories and new secret weapons unleashed against the Allies:

"T'ousands of your tanks, kaput! All Amerikans run, dead, kaput, beck into sea!"

My barely polite interest in these startling little tidbits of information infuriated him and he would stamp out, mouthing angry threats. I think he actually believes that Germany will soon expose some secret weapon that will drive the *Amerikanisch* out of Europe. He'd better be wrong, or I'll be carrying hods of brick in Berlin for the rest of my life!

The nights in Münster were terrible. Each night about ten o'clock, RAF Mosquitoes came over in waves and bombed the airfield. Fortunately our prison was located on the other side of the field from the Operations line and no hits registered on us, but I sometimes used to think that it would be an act of mercy if one of them would connect with me and put me out of my misery.

As soon as the sirens sounded, the guard would come around, stick his head in the door, smile sweetly at me while he sagely nodded his head and said:

"Die Bombern, ja?" and then would lock the door and go off to an air raid shelter.

I crawled under my wooden shelf to escape as far as possible and lay there while the bombardment went on, usually for about two hours.

An uncontrollable shaking would come over me while the bombs were falling and at times the whole building seemed to be doing a sort of uncontrollable shimmy too. After the explosion, bricks and earth would fall outside for a minute and all would become quiet. A few minutes of tense waiting and then the next wave, heard at first very faintly, growing louder and louder. The flak guns would start booming again, the bombs would fall with shuddering impact, and the noise of the throbbing engines would die away in the distance.

I know that I have never been more terrified in my life and I certainly hope I don't have to endure many more of those raids while I am hanging around in Germany. I can't see how the Germans have stood this sort of thing for two years, although of course they can get under cover and don't have to face it all alone, locked up in a room. Maybe my nerves are wearing out.

Those same nerves weren't helped any on the morning of the 5th when we left Münster. Once more we were loaded into trucks and went bumping over the piles of rubble in the streets, but this time there were very few civilians around. Just after we had passed through the city and were lining up along the railroad track in a little suburban way-station, the air raid sirens started howling and here came the Eighth for a daylight attack on the marshalling yards downtown! If by some chance they hadn't brought us out to this station, we'd probably all be as dead as herrings now.

It was the most awe-inspiring spectacle imaginable. The

groups came sailing along, looking very remote and graceful and harmless. Then the flak guns started booming and we could see the black puffs breaking up among the planes. One ship blew up and two or three others broke formation, apparently in trouble. Finally they reached the release point and the smoke-tracer bombs came out and down, describing a beautiful but sinister arc in the air. The smoke trail moved faster and faster as it neared the city, the weight of bombs whistling and sucking at the air, and then there was the most tremendous noise I have ever heard. It was like the sound of freight cars being jammed together by an engine, but magnified thousands of times. We were at least two miles from the point of impact, but the roar deafened us for thirty or forty seconds—"WhuuuuuumWhuuuuuuuumWHUUUUUUUUUM!!" A dense cloud of smoke rolled up and over us, so thick that it was hard to catch a breath. I don't see how anyone could live through a thing like that, but these Jerries apparently consider it all in the day's work and they stood and laughed at our apprehensive skyward glances. It must seem to them the working of divine justice for us to be subjected to the raids of our flying mates.

Some of the ships in the raid carried loads of pamphlets which they dropped over the target. They came down through the smoke, thousands of sheets of newspaper. Many of the Germans standing there in the station picked them up and started reading, but the soldiers went around collecting them in a pile for burning. One elderly soldier who was standing next to me read the news of Allied victories, huge raids and heavy German losses, with genuine interest. But on the back page he came to an article stating that there were eleven million unemployed in Germany. He laughed shortly and pointed it out to me.

"Lies—in Germany, everybody works—there is no unemployment! Propaganda!" and he threw the paper on the pile that was burning, completely satisfied that it was a pack of falsehoods invented by the Americans. I tried to argue with

him, but the strongest point that I could put into German was, "*Ja, aber die Reste ist treue!*" He walked away shaking his head—and a little later came and stood by me to press a little green apple into my hand. Although my knowledge of German is poor, most of the soldiers seem to be flattered that I can speak it at all and they extend more sympathy to me than to the others! The apple was delicious, probably the last fresh fruit I shall have in a long time.

Well, we went by rail to Frankfurt, down through the Ruhr Valley and then down the Rhine. It took a day and night of travelling through mile after mile of empty, bombed-out factories and buildings. In some places ours was the only track, laid over the wreckage of the old tracks. The railroad men hate bomber crews like poison, since they see so much of our work, and at several different stops the guards had to restrain men who wanted to lay hands on us for a little private revenge. At one place, Haltern, where we got out to change trains, the guards were forced to fire over the heads of a crowd who picked up some tiles and started throwing them as they advanced toward us. We all stuck close to those nice, friendly guards.

We made a stop of three or four hours in Essen and were moved out to an isolated part of the platform to wait for another train. Much to our surprise and that of the guards, a little old woman dressed in grey came bustling down the platform with a big basket under her arm and approached us. After a brief argument with the guards, she went inside the little shed which we were using as a shelter against the wind. The sergeant of guards came up to me and explained that she was a Red Cross "Grey Sister" who had insisted on feeding us! Her basket was full of black bread and wienerwurst and she was making coffee in the shed! When I explained her presence to the rest of the prisoners, the guards had a hard time restraining their delighted yells. But they quieted quickly enough when they realized that if attention were attracted to us there would be no food.

The sergeant told me to pick two men and go in to help. We went inside and were greeted with a warm smile from her wizened little face. She put us to work making sandwiches from the bread and meat while a guard watched from the door. Whenever he turned his attention outside for a moment, she would snatch up a bit of meat and hold it to one of our mouths, whispering "*Hier, hier—essen!*" She soon had the *ersatz* coffee boiling and the food and drink were passed out to the men, who clustered around eagerly at her signal. We had not eaten since our slice of bread was given out early that morning. And that sweet little *Schwester* stood by, smiling her wrinkled smile and refilling cups!

The guards still looked so surprised that it must have been an unprecedented occasion and as soon as we had finished they hurried her departure, afraid that some of the civilians might see her administering to a group of hated flyers. As she left, the prisoners caught at her hand, saying "*Danke, Mutter, Danke,*" in voices that were choked with gratitude and appreciation. So she went bobbing down the platform, the only German we have met who can still feel compassion for miserable and lonely men. To all others, we are the brutal and murderous Americans who come over their cities in such devastating force, an object of hatred; to her, we were hungry boys who needed her care. God bless the Red Cross and keep that old German lady from our bombs!

Soon after our unexpected meal, we were moved to another, more crowded platform where our train was to come in. Here I got another big scare. Three men dressed in civilian clothes came up to our Jerry sergeant and showed him credentials which made him, all at once, very respectful—not a characteristic attitude of his. So we decided that these must be Gestapo men. Apparently the leader asked our sergeant if he had any men in our group who spoke German, because he called me—*me!*—out of the ranks. Then to my dismay this unsavory civilian announced that he wanted to take me—*me!*—away for

some questioning! I was ready to drop through the concrete platform at such a prospect, but that magnificent sergeant evidently felt that he had a responsibility for delivering us to his superiors and he flatly refused in spite of many threats.

As soon as I thought I could, I scuttled back and immersed myself in the ranks and, although the three men kept hanging around and staring at me coldly and covetously, I managed to stay there until we were safely on the train. Why did Dame Fortune pick me for this hero role! I ain't the type and I don't want to live up to it!

At Frankfurt, another town observing "Be Unkind to Air-men Week," we boarded a trolley car with the early morning commuters and went out to the suburb of Ober-Usel, the location of a big interrogation center. We were thrown into solitary upon arrival, about eight o'clock on the morning of the 6th.

Here, after trying so hard to be careful, I finally made a dumb mistake. An interpreter came into my room with the list of names in our shipment and asked me to check the spelling. I corrected the spelling on Kaczorowski and Corwin and didn't even realize what I was doing until he said,

"Now, who are the other men on your crew, please?"

Newcomb, the Brain!

Late in the afternoon I was called upstairs from my windowless dungeon for interrogation. I was ushered into a little room equipped with a desk and two chairs. The interpreter gave me a cigarette, politely offered me a chair, and started in.

After a half hour of his asking questions and my repeating my name, rank and serial number, he began threatening me with immediate execution, the Gestapo, SS, and solitary for six months, but I decided to stick it out and see if he was bluffing. He was, and that evening I was taken to another building where I joined a lot of prisoners awaiting shipment from the Center. These men told me that I was exceptionally lucky to have been placed in an out-going group so soon. Most of them had spent from a week to two months in solitary confinement.

That being so, I *am* very fortunate—just the few days I have spent in solitary have convinced me that it is no life for anyone who wants to stay sane. While there I sang songs, made up poetry, had long imaginary conversations with everyone I ever knew, and felt that I had almost exhausted the possibilities of my repertoire.

The following day we were routed out before dawn and fell into formation for counting and instructions. The guards offered to let us keep our shoes and belts instead of taking them away for the duration of the trip, provided our senior officer was willing to sign a pledge that no one would try to escape. He held a vote among the two hundred-odd men in the group and the majority ruled for the parole. I voted against it on the off chance that I might get hopped up enough to escape, but I wasn't particularly annoyed when my side was defeated. I am too tired of the whole darned business to do anything but sleep and eat whenever I get the chance. Ever since I landed I have been conscious of a great lassitude, a complete lack of responsibility now that I am through with combat.

We marched clear down through Frankfurt this time, about four miles, under heavy guard. Although the people pulled their usual spitting and throat-cutting pantomime tricks, there were too many of us, Americans and English, and too many German soldiers for them to try anything as they had on previous occasions. At the station we were packed into several passenger coaches with wooden seats. I was not quick enough to get a seat so I stayed on my feet, wedged in a corner.

This journey by train took much longer than it normally would have taken due to the repeated detouring and backtracking necessitated by the operations of the Eighth Air Force. (Cheers and applause!) It finally developed that we were headed for Wetzlar, some forty or fifty miles northeast of Frankfurt, but we didn't arrive until late afternoon. We were unloaded, counted once more, and then started on a long trek

through the town and up and over some hills to the *Dulag Luft* transient camp.

It was an eight-mile march and as each man had eaten only one slice of bread that day, and that at five in the morning, I and many others were very faint and dizzy by the time we toiled up the last hill and were admitted through the gates of the camp. Here we filled out forms again, leaving most of them blank, were searched and counted, and led to the SHOWERS!

It was wonderful. Each of us had a hot shower, we were each given a towel, soap, and razor, and a pack of cigarettes, and life began being lived once more.

Yesterday evening we had a big meal of our first Red Cross food. Men here are given weekly Red Cross parcels containing 10½ pounds of food and these are turned in to a communal mess where the meals are prepared.

That first evening, the men who have been here for awhile went without their own full ration so that we newcomers might eat our fill of the soup and the potatoes with corned beef mashed in them that constituted the meal.

"Tonight," I said to Henry, "I'm going to shave!" So after supper, with much wailing and gnashing of teeth, I scraped off my week-old beard and then went out to look around before we were locked up for the night.

We are confined in a large rectangle of barbed wire fences, one inside the other. About ten feet inside the main fence there is a "Warning Wire," labelled in English, over which we must not step. At the gate there is a small enclosure called the *Vorlager*. Men going out of the enclosure are let into that, then the inner gate is closed and the outer one opened. Guard towers on high poles are spaced around the fence and the guards in them are equipped with machine guns.

Today there have been many new men coming in. As they enter, we lean out of the windows and call, just as in the old upperclass cadet days in San Antonio:

"You'll be so-o-o-orry!"

If they are cheered half as much as I was when I heard that familiar phrase in this strange and forbidding place, it is well worth the effort.

I am living with thirty-six men in a room fifteen feet square. We sleep on three tiers of wooden shelves, on wood-shaving mattresses which are obviously and actively full of lice. I never thought I would have lice, but then I never thought I would be a prisoner of the Germans either. And I never thought I could write this much at one sitting. Most of the activity of war is presumably behind me now and life will be a matter of marking time until the conclusion is reached. As the Jerry soldiers say so proudly, displaying their mastery of English,

"Fur you der var ist ofer, *Ja?*"

"Ja, you said it, bud." They must teach them that phrase when the poor suckers are sworn in!

Colonel Stark, the American Commander here, says that we will move on to permanent camps as transportation becomes available.

We were all permitted to send a printed card to our parents with our names and "Wounded" or "Not Wounded" as the choice of remarks. I hope mine gets home soon to relieve my family's mind. Several men who claim to know say that the "Missing In Action" notification isn't sent home for two weeks, giving you time to return if you can escape.

Poor little Henry is really down in the dumps. His wife was expecting a baby this summer and it is to be born this month. Now he will not know whether it is a boy or girl, or even if his wife comes through in good shape. And at the time of its birth, he will be "missing in action" to all those at home. He is very despondent, as might be supposed, and sits chewing on his mustache and staring into space.



CHAPTER EIGHT

October 10, 1944 Yesterday the enlisted men were all shipped out, ours among them, to an unknown destination. A great many were Limeys who have been here at Dulag for some time. As a result, there is a lot more room now in the mess hall and around the compound.

Several of us borrowed a football from one of the permanent personnel of the camp and tried to teach some of the English fellows how to play touch football, but they didn't care much for the game. The way we played it, perhaps they are not to be blamed!

I have effected a cagey trade of ten cigarettes (we are supposed to receive five packs a week from the Red Cross from now on) for an old Frank Medico curved-stem pipe. Now I am collecting all the cigarette butts I can find and opening them to use the tobacco in my Sherlock Holmes pipe. The only trouble is that cigarette butts are short around here and most men save their own anyway. Pity the poor snipe-shooter! I lost my pipe during the international football game, but frantic searching located it in the mud where it had fallen.

Today we have had two air raids, but there is a concrete shelter here into which we can all cram ourselves, and with the company of the others down there, and the wisecracks, it doesn't bother me. As an added consolation, the bombers are

FOR YOU DER VAR IST OFER

When your tanks are gone,
And the course you're on
Holds hope for a view of Dover;
You get a surprise
When you realize
That "for you der var ist ofer!"

When that "harmless" flak
Breaks your Seventeen's back,
No longer a skyway rover—
And you're bailing out,
There isn't a doubt,
"For you der var ist ofer!"

When you sight the Hun
With his well-aimed gun,
While his comrades eagerly hover
Around you, they say,
In their guttural way,
"For you der var ist ofer!"

As you march into town
With an uneasy frown
'Cause the guard had folks in Hanover,
You get premonitions
You'll fly no more missions,
And "for you der var ist ofer!"

When you're pushed into camp
With a prisoner's stamp,
Though you'd like to head for cover,
You wait for the date
That they open the gate;
Then the doggone war *is* over!

Unknown P.O.W.

merely passing over and not bombing here. Fear is certainly magnified when you have to face it all alone. Just to cheer us up, the Germans report that two or three hundred men were killed last week in a POW camp south of here—the AAF got a little bit off base. Many of the POW's here were strafed by our fighters while travelling in German trains. I should repeat to myself, fifty times a day, "*Newcomb, you are a lucky boy,*" just to remind myself how fortunate I am to be alive, unwounded, and in good health.

October 13, 1944 And now we are all on a train. We came down to the station last night and were given a Red Cross parcel for every two men before boarding. We spent the night in the station at Wetzlar, trying to sleep in our very crowded quarters to the accompaniment of wailing air raid sirens. Fortune has smiled and given us regular Jerry coaches instead of the boxcars they usually carry prisoners in. These have barred windows and a guard corridor outside the compartments and were evidently built for transporting prisoners. Our cars are hooked on right behind the engine in a long freight train, so that if it is strafed we will share whatever fate is in store for the engineer.

Tom and I are together with nine other men in a compartment for eight. We are taking turns sitting up in the baggage rack, which does not adapt itself very well to my long legs. A lot of the time is spent standing as we are now in a marshalling yard, waiting for a clear track, and sweating out bombers or fighters coming our way for an attack. This afternoon we heard the sirens let go with their "*Whoop, whooop, WHOOOOP!*" in the town we had just passed, but our engineer stopped by a cleft in a hill and we were not noticed by the escorting P-51's that went by. The guards locked us in and hid themselves in an adjacent forest. Nice guys!

Water is our first problem on the train because we get only fifteen or twenty quarts a day for our whole car of seventy men. Tom and I are sharing a Red Cross parcel; we have a can

of corned beef, one of Spam, a tiny can of orange concentrate, one of cheese, a box of prunes, a box of ten K-2 biscuits, a fourth pound of sugar cubes, a can of powdered milk and a little one of powdered coffee, and two D-ration bars. There are five packs of smokes between us and a little bar of soap apiece. The Germans give us a sixth of a loaf of black bread each day and there is a can of oleomargarine in the parcel.

Sunday, October 15, 1944 It is almost dusk on our third day of travel, and we have seen a lot of Germany. The train has just passed through the pile of bricks and rubble that they call Berlin, and has stopped outside to take on water.

Yesterday we found ourselves in the bombing area of the Eighth and either barely got out of towns or stopped just short of them to escape any more intimate relations with the air war. They blew up the tracks ahead of us at a town called Eisen, or Eusen, and we had to go around another way.

The guard who haunts the corridor nearest our compartment has been keeping us better informed today and says that we should pull into Barth, where our new camp is located, sometime tonight.

One of the Limeys in this compartment is a colorful character from Rhodesia who was a glider pilot captured in the Arnheim landings. He is called "Duke" by the others, a purely complimentary title, and he keeps up a running monologue of very positive opinions about anything and everything. At the moment he is launching a dissertation in my direction as to why it is impolite to be writing while he is talking! We let him ramble on, laugh as much as it deserves when he happens to say something funny, and then once again ignore him.

After three days of staring at one another's faces in this car, and of cursing at elbows and knees poking into one's ribs, none of us are too great friends. My legs are so cramped that I can hardly stand up when I ask the guard to escort me to the end of the car.

We seem to be starting up again—it's the last lap now.

Bought a pack of cards from the guard for twenty cigarettes, and some of us play bridge a lot of the time, but it is a German pack meant for some thirty-two card game called "Skat," so our rules have undergone a little revision.

From what the guard says, this new camp will be heaven—baths, canteen, swimming pool, a regular country club. No one believes him, but it is nice to listen to so we nod our heads and say,

"Ja, ja, gut, gut!"

I wonder if he believes it himself. He looks dumb enough to. No wonder Hitler had such an easy job in taking over the German people if many of them are like this brave *soldat*. He can't see beyond his long, watery nose, but he's a much better man than I am—he has a gun!

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF COMBAT

Perspiration
Preparation
Salutation
Elevation
Formation
Penetration
Palpitation
Infiltration
Consternation
Confirmation
Situation
Capitulation
Internation
Interrogation
Transportation
Destination
Inhabitation
Duration
German ration
Frustration
Stagnation
Liberation
Repatriation
Elation



CHAPTER NINE

Monday, October 16, 1944 After having breakfast on the train, which finished off our Red Cross boxes, and an hour spent in observing a flock of noisy geese parading around in the rain that was falling in Barth, we disembarked. Once again we were lined up and counted, then marched through the little town of Barth, along narrow, winding streets and under an ancient brick tower which straddles the road at the edge of town. A half-hour's march through the drizzling rain brought us to *Stalag Luft 1*, a rather unlovely community characterized by long, low frame buildings and much barbed wire.

Hundreds of the "old lags" lined up along the fences, looking for familiar faces and trying to pick out friends among us. A few shouted,

"Who won the World Series?" but most cried,

"When's the war going to be over?"

They heard a variety of answers. When we had gone through the usual counting, filling out of forms, and searching of clothing and "luggage," we were allowed to fill out radiogram forms of ten words each which are to be "sent to your families right away." Then we were led to the shower room for a wonderful warm shower, and our clothes went through a delousing mach-

ine operated by British personnel. Mine certainly needed the delousing!



JERRY JAILER

We were then issued some Red Cross clothing. I received a little GI yarn cap, two handkerchiefs (sadly needed for my

cold), a necktie (!), and two pairs of GI socks. Thus adorned, we marched to our compound, which is called North-north, being in that location with respect to the rest of the camp. As we walked in, the fifteen hundred men in the compound formed along a double line to look us over for familiar faces.

About halfway down the line, someone called my name and I caught sight of Arthur Segars, who lived in my barracks in RTU at Pyote, Texas. He is here alone, as he was blown out of his ship by an explosion that killed the rest of the crew. He accompanied me to the orientation lecture by Colonel Spicer, Commander of Group Five, who sports the longest, fiercest, most bristly mustache in camp.

Then Arthur took me to my assigned barracks, Block 5, Room 6. I am rooming with fourteen other men, all of whom have been here for some time. I drew two German blankets, a bowl, cup and spoon, half a Red Cross parcel, and a huge ration of stewed barley. It was unhappily flavored by a number of stewed worms, but I gulped it down. I ran into Hancock, whom I hadn't seen since I trained in Waco, Texas, and talked over old times with him. At four o'clock Roll Call the formation of a Glee Club was announced, so I went to the meeting in Block 7 and got my name in.

At this point, memories of that large bowl of barley, my first big meal for a long time, became most painful and I barely made it to our twenty-hole throne room before I was violently sick. Back to the barracks for supper, and then a mad dash down the hall to be sick again. At last, more dead than alive, I dropped into my sack, earlier hand-stuffed with woodshavings and excelsior and placed in the hallway, where I proceeded to sleep eleven hours, interrupted only by a Jerry waking me up to look at my dog-tags. What won't they think of next! And was I sick! Doubtless "something I et."

Tuesday, October 17, 1944 As it happens, my arrival has coincided with a great event, a big variety show in the North Compound. Only twelve men from each room could go,

so we dealt cards for it and I was fortunate. We were marched over on a "parole-party" understanding; that is, we pledged ourselves to make no attempts at escape and to create no trouble of any kind. We all packed into the North One mess hall, seated ourselves on floors and benches, and the show began.

It was presented as a radio program, or series of programs, with appropriate commercials, from Station P-O-W. There was a very good dance band, playing from "The Airman's Rest Camp, only a few miles from beautiful Barth, and just off the Rostock Turnpike," one of the biggest laughs of the show. Soap operas, skits, the North Glee Club and quartet; all in all it was a two-hour show, and wonderfully well done. As a finale, the band, soloists and Glee Club premiered "All Through the Night," a popular song composed by the director. Many fellows were guilty of moist eyes at hearing certain songs or reminiscent dialogue, myself not excepted. It was over all too soon and we guests went back to our particular rectangle of barbed wire.

I must describe the fence: it consists, first of all, of a woven wire fence eight feet high and bent inward at the top. The barbs are almost an inch long and are spaced every two inches! Then comes a space of three or four feet filled with big loose tangles of wire, then another high fence. Men have been known to go over or through, but I don't quite see how.

There are six guard towers for our compound, wooden boxes on fifteen-foot stilts, equipped with glassed-in sides and a gimlet-eyed guard per each, who dispassionately observes our aimless movements below him. To make him feel important, each tower has a spotlight and a machine gun mounted in it. I think I'd just as soon be a POW as a guard; they don't appear to be enjoying life very much. As at Dulag, there is a warning wire about ten feet inside the inner fence. Anyone who steps over that is shot.

We are locked in the barracks each evening at 5:30 and unlocked at 7:30 in the morning. Between these hours, search-

lights play over the grounds from the machine gun towers and



GUARD TOWER

big German police dogs are released to roam around with the guards who accompany them in order to look for tunnels under

the barracks. The Kriegies call them "Bossdogs"—those teeth are sufficient to boss any hapless fellow who gets within reach!

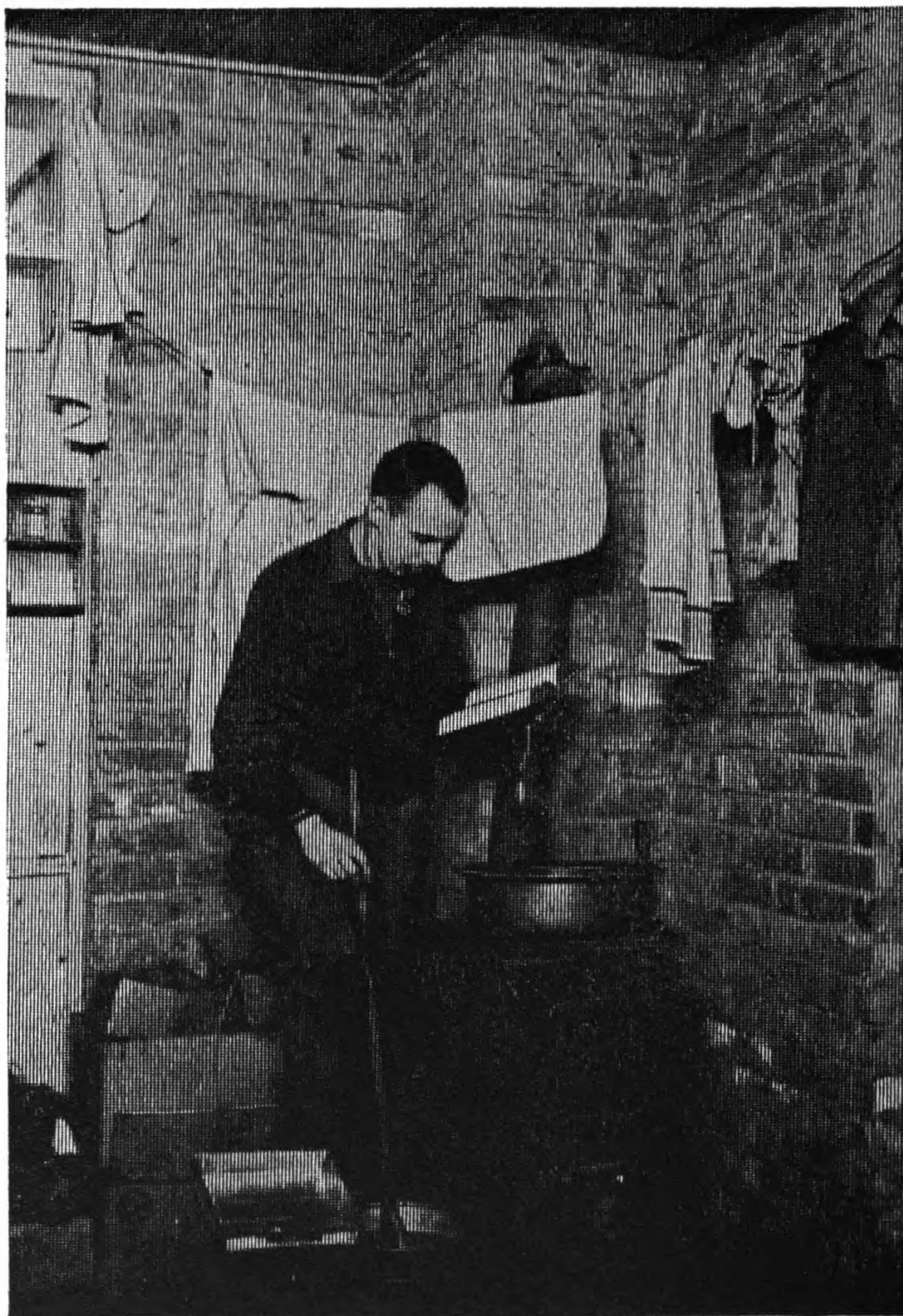
The term "Kriegie" had better be explained, as it is a general prefix and appellation around here. The German word for "prisoner of war" is *Kriegesgefangener*, so the derivation is inevitable. Everything is named with "Kriegie" as a prefix. Also, most formations are called "parties"—shower-party, parole-party, etc. I should make a dictionary of Kriegie terms so that on my return (could it be?) to the States, my speech can be translated. The German *nichts*, for "nothing," is also in frequent use as "nothing," "no," "never," and "not." Basic German, we got!

Every evening, a typewritten sheet of news, "POW-WOW, the Only Truthful Newspaper in Germany," is thrown over the fence from North One and passed from room to room for public reading. The South Compound has a secret radio, built from scraps of metal and wire and a few smuggled essentials, and the news is compiled from the radio, daily German reports and newly arrived Kriegies. When someone in the room has read it aloud for us, it is passed on to the next room with our number crossed off. When everyone has heard POW-WOW, it is burned so that the Germans can't obtain any copies. And they can't locate the radio because it is dismantled and the various pieces are carried in Kriegies' pockets until they assemble for the next broadcast!

Our block, squadron, barracks (all synonymous) Commander is Captain Don Warren, a slightly-built fellow who loves to sing tenor, and he sings out loudly every morning to get us up for Roll Call. Since my bed is in the hall, he usually carols,

"Roooooll Call!" right in my ear. It's a poor way to greet the day, I can testify.

Wednesday, October 18, 1944 Every morning at 8:00 we have Roll Call. We fall out in formation in front of the barracks and a Jerry major inspects ranks while his non-coms count the men. The same process is repeated at 4:00



"ECONOMY OF EFFORT" BY CAPT. WARREN

P.M., but in the morning we have about ten minutes of mass calisthenics. Spurned by some, they are very welcome to me, not only for the needed exercise but to keep warmed up a little. It is nearly always clouded over in this area and is very damp, since we are less than a mile from the Baltic Sea, out on a little peninsula which leaves our camp surrounded by water on three sides.



"ALL OUT FOR ROLL CALL!"

Once again my arrival is at a fortunate time as my block had showers this morning and I can bathe twice this week. We form at the *Vorlager* gate in groups of forty and march under guard to the North Compound, where we wait again until the previous group passes us, go into a little room and strip. Then we are herded into the shower room where the long pipes overhead have twenty outlets in them. The water is turned on and the two men at each sprinkler try to get wet and soap themselves as quickly as possible. In two minutes, the water is turned off and we have two minutes to soap a little more. Then three

minutes are given in which to wash the soap off! It's a real rat-race and if the man sharing your shower is not cooperative, you may find yourself left soapy until the next time. After this, I rate one shower a week.

This morning Bill Manniere and Bob Sagen, both of whom I last saw at Blackland AAF, came over to see me. Manniere met his brother, a paratroop major, here for the first time in two years, neither knowing the other was a POW! The major is Provost Marshal of our compound. Also, Bob Brown, the Poker Player of Pyote, showed up, looking much out of place and feeling the same way. He tells me that Wilmot, my engineer at Pyote, was on his crew and was killed. Poor Wilmot was a gentle, kindly kid—it almost seems that they are the ones who get hit.

It is hard to realize that all these thousands of men have exciting stories of battle, death, and bailouts they could tell, that they are only the remnants of the American casualty list and most of their flying mates are dead now. They look like any bunch of soldiers back in the States, although very short of correct uniforms! Every imaginable combination of American, English, German and French issue is employed as clothing, much of it clumsily altered by Kriegie seamsters.

Most of all, it is hard to conceive that I am one of these. But then, every situation I have met since leaving the States has seemed unreal and unbelievable, as though it were happening to someone else. The only trouble is, they haven't been and aren't. So here I am and may-the-war-end-soon, Amen!



CHAPTER TEN

Thursday, October 19, 1944 Today we new Kriegies had a photo-party. We marched down to the photolab and were fingerprinted and photographed while descriptions of us were being filled out. The other fellows I came to camp with are for the most part scattered out in different rooms, but sixteen of them have a new room and are starting from scratch. Henry is in this room and he says they are having trouble getting organized properly.

The advantage of moving into a room with men who have a lot of "time in," as I have done, is that they have their organization and their schedules all fixed up, and know all the ropes of Kriegie life. We have several cooking pans made from Klim powdered milk cans and a little stove, equipped with an ingenious blower, constructed from the same material by Tom Gose, the room's mechanic. When someone is turning the blower crank, things get hot in a hurry. It is all made from Klimtins and shoelaces.

Then too, they have plenty of cigarettes from home. Grissom, Osborne, Bowden and Winslow gave me cigarettes, so I have enough to last for awhile. Army D-ration chocolate bars from the Red Cross parcels are the precious items, along with sugar. Bill Lordan gave me some razor blades, Weiss gave me a

ROLL CALL

The morning sun shines bleak and thin
Along the corridor.

I dream, with covers 'round my chin,
That I'm in Floridor.

Too soon this blissful state is rent,
And I snatched from my dream—
The captain howls, with foul intent,
His early-morning theme—

Roll Call!

On empty afternoons, I seek
The solace of a book,
A task which daunted men, or weak,
Have long since now forsook.

I join the never-ending line
And patiently I wait.

Then as I get my book, and sign,
There comes that daily date—

Roll Call!

It's raining as it does in Barth,
But inside, in the room,
The Kriegie, *ersatz*, tin-stove hearth
Almost dispels the gloom.

I'm stretched full length upon my bed;
Contentedly, I sigh—

Once more, like thunder overhead,
That demanding, chilly cry—

Roll Call!

Sometimes I think that when I leave
This uninviting camp,
There may be final, sweet reprieve
From cold and wind and damp;
But yet I fear that through the years,
Whenever I'm unwary,
I still will hear upon my ears
That call designed to harry—
Roll Call!!

Alan H. Newcomb

Dulag-Luft. Kriegsgefangenenkartel.

Gefangenen-
ErkennungsmarkeNr. 6245 *heli*Dulag-Luft
Eingeliefertam: 7. 10. 44 *W*NAME: NEWCOMBVorname: Alan HamptonDienstgrad: 2. Lt. Funktion: CP.Matrikel-No.: 0-704 371Geburtsdag: 28. 2. 21Geburtsort: Delaware
OhioReligion: prot.Zivilberuf: -Staatsangehörigkeit: amerikan.Vorname des Vaters: CharlesFamiliennamen der Mutter: HarrisonVerheiratet mit: - *Witz*Anzahl der Kinder: -

Heimatschrift:

Mr. Charles Newcomb
44 W. Central Ave.
Delaware, OhioAbbruch am: 30. 9. 44 bei: Münster Flugzeugtyp: B 17Gefangennahme am: " bei: "

Nähere Personalbeschreibung

Figur: schlankGröße: 1,88 mSchädelform: langHaare: blondGewicht: 70 kgGesichtsform: länglichGesichtsfarbe: gesundAugen: haselNase: geradeBart: -Gebiß: o.k.

Besondere Kennzeichen:

Nicht ausgezeichnet

Front



Profil

Rechter Zeigefinger



Fingerabdruck

shaving-soap stick, and Clark presented a brush. They are darned nice to me, especially since they know I have nothing to give in return.

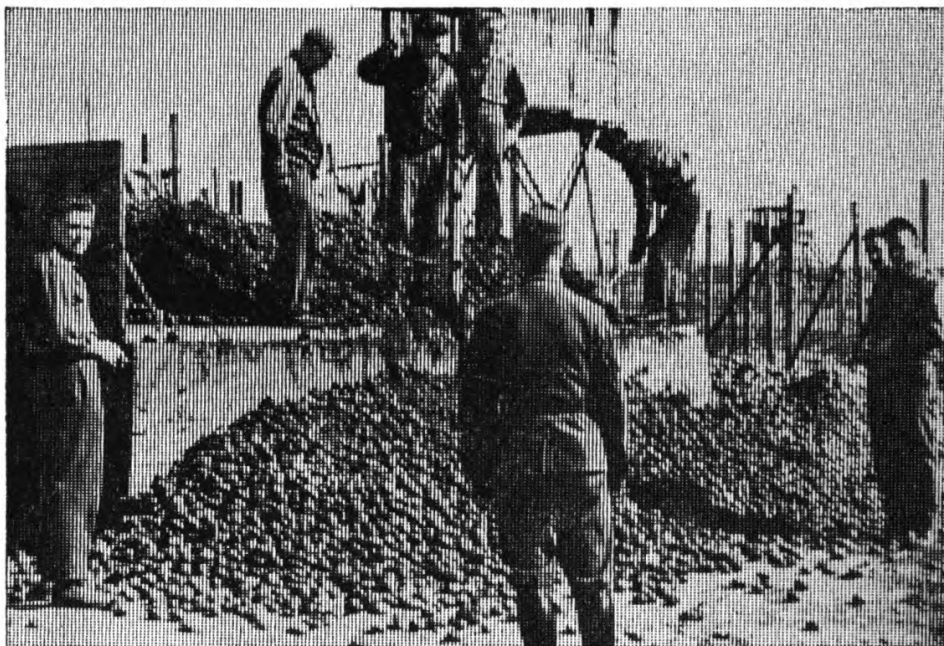
It's funny that being here, deprived of what we used to consider the necessities of life and forced to conserve and save everything, seems to have made everyone more generous; that being forced to live in constant company in a small space, with little to do to pass the time, has made everyone more considerate and obliging. Men close doors carefully and conscientiously, knock before entering rooms, are careful not to disturb someone who is lucky enough to be absorbed in reading, sleeping or cooking. Everyone takes pains to do a favor or to acknowledge courtesy, and is careful not to interrupt a conversation.

Maybe it is a compliment to American character and breeding—maybe only a realization that any other situation would be intolerable and that as long as we are in prison and can't get out, we'd better take this course as the easiest and most pleasant. At least it's interesting to observe. I am told that when friction does develop anywhere, it is sudden and explosive and thereby kills itself.

Friday, October 20, 1944 Tomorrow is inspection day, so we did a lot of cleaning today. Claude Adams and I took the table top and benches outside and scrubbed them with brushes. The same treatment was given by the others to the larder shelves and floor. I haven't mentioned the larder. As long as they come, we draw five parcels from the Ration Room in Block 7 at three different times each week. Each man takes out his D-bars, sugar, cigs and vitamin tablets, and the rest of the food is put in the larder to be used by the KP's. Mine is issued on Friday.

I am told that there used to be a little package of pepper in the Red Cross parcels, but some of the lads conceived the bright idea of opening a window at night and throwing the pepper into the Bossgod's eyes when he leaped for them, so the Jerries now take all the pepper out and use it themselves. They have

just instituted a new rule that all cans will be punched or slit before being issued so that no food can be saved up for escape purposes. We have to empty the meats out right away to prevent their spoiling before they can be eaten. There is never any reserve anyway.



UNLOADING POTATOES

Rations are handled within the camp by regular details who pull the bread from town on a wagon and haul the parcels and potatoes around to the various compounds where they are distributed by local details. Each barracks has its Ration Officer who sees to it that each room and each man gets an equal share. Pete Barascano is ours. So nearly all our direct contact with camp administration is handled through our own officers, who are of course under the command of the German compound officer in matters of general policy.

We have a new man in the room, a B-26 pilot named Bud Gremore, who was lost in the soup on a flight from Paris to London, and had to bail out over Holland! He is also sleeping

out in the hall, across from me, so we now have sixteen men in the room. The Jerries are building a new compound next to this one and we newer arrivals may have to move over there when it is completed. I hope not, as the rooms there will contain thirty men, sleeping in three tiers of shelves, and there will be a communal mess hall, neither of which conditions sounds very enticing.

Our room is sixteen by twenty-four feet in dimension. The door and window face each other and double-deck beds line the walls, except for the corner in which the stove and larder



WASHROOM AND BLOCK 7 FROM MY ROOM

stand. A large table with long benches around it takes up all the center area of the room, so that there is little room to move about. All activity takes place at the table, on the individual's bed, or in the kitchen corner. This evening the drab place is shining with newly scrubbed surfaces. All our personal belongings are neatly stowed away in the big Red Cross cartons that serve as bureaus.

Saturday, October 21, 1944 Inspection was at ten this morning, with Room 6's occupants all shaved and attired in ties and newly shined shoes. I slept with my trousers under the unyielding mattress on my bed, and they have a barely perceptible crease. Col. Spicer made the inspection and pronounced our room "very good." Later, at Roll Call, our barracks number was read as being excused from inspection next week, as were four others.



BLUE MONDAY

There are ten barracks in this compound, two washrooms, a laundry room, and an outdoor field kitchen where the KP's draw the hot water and potato rations, and where I was given that fateful bowl of barley and worms on my first day.

Most of Block 207 is inhabited by the "wheels," the captains, majors, and colonels, who are the executive officers. Also in Seven are the Red Cross issuing rooms, supply rooms, etc. In 204 is the Food Acco, where you may trade various food items for others needed to fill out a certain meal, all handled by an

elaborate system of equivalent "food points." In the middle of our area, for no good reason at all, is a large cesspool into which empties the washing water. This is Lake Latrine.

We wash in one of five round marble (scrounging in Italy?) basins, each of which has eight little spigots in a center pipe. There are two mirrors, but I shave in our room with a little trench mirror that came in a personal parcel from the States. The laundry room has two stove-tubs and twelve concrete tubs. Which reminds me, I should be doing some laundry now. It takes a lot of waiting in line to get near the water. With fifteen hundred men using these facilities, keeping clean is an all-day job.

When I want to wash my pants or shirt, I borrow extras to wear while mine are drying. Some of the men who have been here for a while have a change or two of clothing. How I wish I had worn longhandled underwear on that Münster mission! It would be mighty cozy now.

THE CHAPLAIN

So you feel that you've been cheated in this party
called a war?

And you're getting bruised a little in the grapplin'?

Well, I'll tell you what to do—

There's an Army nurse for you!

Just go and tell your troubles to the Chaplain.

Has your marmalade got flies in? Well, you'll find
him most obligin';

Would you like a ticket? He's the man to see.

He'll meet you like a brother,

He'll treat you like a mother,

He will bandage up your thumb and serve you tea.

Sure, oh sure, I know it's tough—so you think you've
had enough?

So the Cap'n's gonna learn a thing or two?

Well, it's a nasty, horrid war—

But just you go in through that door

And the Chaplain will take tender care of you.

All you've gotta do is tell him that th' Cap's forever
yellin',

And you've had your fill of duty and K.P.

Why, he'll take it down in *typing*!

Every symptom of your griping!

And he'll file it in his folder carefully!

Unknown P.O.W.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Sunday, October 22, 1944 This morning we had an air raid. All Kriegies have to go to their barracks and not come out, on penalty of being shot down by the guards. But we all lean out of the windows, trying to see the planes or hear sound of action. During a night raid all the lights are turned off and it would be a good time to try to make an escape, but recent American orders were put out to stop the attempts for a while due to Jerry threats of reprisals.

The first Glee Club rehearsal was held this afternoon, with twenty men showing up, and it went off well. The director, George Marple, is from my block—not very experienced in directing, but he knows enough about music to learn. He's a graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan and flew B-26's out of Italy. In spite of my cold, which is still bad, I was chosen as bass in the quartet and spent a long time singing with the other three, until supper time. We sounded quite harmonious, although a little ragged since it was our first meeting.

Monday, October 23, 1944 Well, I am settling down to the monotonous job of being a Kriegie. To an enthusiastic Red Cross speaker back home it must seem that we have a wonderful life, having nothing to do but play games and lounge around being fed! And it is true that the Red Cross does do a great deal for us, more than anyone feels he can

repay. But anyone who has been a prisoner can testify to the longing for freedom that obsesses him, the disgust at thought of all the empty days he knows are ahead. I had never realized the love of freedom was so strong in me, and I imagine that the same is true of the others here. It is only by the adoption of a philosophical and passive attitude that life is made bearable here, and even so, depression is inevitable. A hunger for home, for a steak or ice-cream cone seems to be inevitable too. Hey, Jerry, let's quit and go home!

Tuesday, October 24, 1944 Yesterday afternoon I played volleyball for several hours and the unaccustomed raw air or too many cigarettes, or something, gave me a touch of pleurisy. I spent a miserable day and night, but today the pains are gone and my cold is better—maybe those six aspirins helped!

Grissom and I made some delicious fudge for the fellows to-night. Recipe: four squares of D-bar, two boxes of sugar, oleo and salt. Lovely, lovely! Everyone had a piece almost an inch square.

Wednesday, October 25, 1944 Tonight I carved a pair of wooden clogs from a bed slat and made straps of an old pajama belt given me by Ray Mull, so I will no longer have to wear my shoes after lockup. These are the shoes I wore all through training and they are always so wet that I need to give them a chance to dry or I shall never be rid of my cold.

I have also made a cigarette case out of my Red Cross artificial-leather sewing kit, and a pajama bunny-suit from a long broadcloth robe contributed by Osborne. I cut and sewed legs into it, then stitched the legs of an old union suit to the hem and drew the ends together.

Thursday, October 26, 1944 Today I was on K.P. for the first time, with my running mate, John Omonsky. We did all the cooking and cleaning for our room, as is our duty every eight days. The Newcomb-Omonsky menu: for breakfast, the usual toasted black bread with jam and coffee;

for lunch, the usual toasted black bread spread with a cheese-salmon-liver pâté combination and coffee; for dinner, the usual toasted black bread, potatoes, Spam (spread with a Newcomb innovation of grated cheese), *and* a cake made by John out of ground-up K-2 biscuits, D-bar, powdered milk and raisins! Most delicious, it was, although a bit lumpy. I suppose that at home it would have lain in the pantry until it was thrown out. The bread loses some of its rank taste when toasted, so we always have it that way.

In addition to the cooking, we washed dishes, heated water, swept floors, (our brooms are bundles of twigs tied together with a wire), brought in water for the night, and saw that the men on other details did their jobs. We have a K.P. roster, one for bringing coal from the gate, one for helping with ration details, and one for bringing over the Red Cross parcels. "Each man in his turn plays many parts!"

Friday, October 27, 1944 I stood Goon Guard this morning for the hour after breakfast. This eminent dignitary watches both doors of the barracks and, at the approach or entrance of a Jerry, calls,

"On guard!" so that everyone will know a "Goon" is among those present and can stop all prohibited activity or conversation. When the German leaves, the "All Clear" is given. They often come into our barracks to talk to Amundsen, who speaks very good German and carries on the trade for little articles we need that can be smuggled in. He has a tame little guard named Humbert, whom he plies with coffee and cigarettes, and Humbert keeps us supplied with ink, erasers, pencils, matches, lighter fluid and other luxuries.

We have received notification that the camp is now under SS Nazi Party supervision instead of the Luftwaffe, news which does not exactly make us jump for joy, but which should not have much apparent effect. The camp personnel is the same, having all been sworn in to the SS, so their orders now come from a different command.

Tonight there was a classical record concert next door in Room 7, where they had a little wind-up victrola and some records. We listened to a three-hour concert of Beethoven, Tschaikowsky and Mozart. It was really beautiful and moving to hear music again, and it was over all too soon. The Swedish YMCA is responsible for getting the equipment to us and it is passed from barracks to barracks.

Saturday, October 28, 1944 Today was very cold, with a steady drizzle of rain, so I stayed in the room and read Grayson's collection of "Stories for Men," which just arrived in Osborne's book parcel; certainly no title could be more appropriate for a place like this!

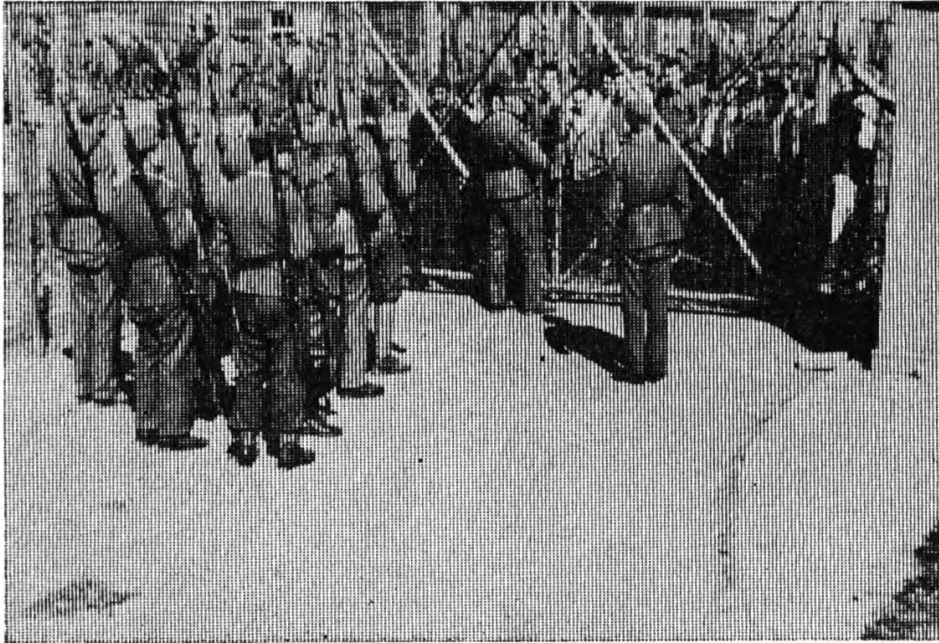
The smoke from the fire is so thick that you can barely see across the room. I cough and sneeze at regular intervals, but it is better than facing the damp and freezing out-of-doors. MacAdams gave me a sweater today, since he has two, and will it be welcome! I only wish I might acquire some longhanded underwear for the coming winter months. Most of the fellows have a suit, but I arrived a little late. I am entertaining hopes of putting over a big deal for an overcoat before too long.

Once every week or two, the Germans pull what we call a "search party." While the whole compound is out on Roll Call, a flying squad of intelligence men come into the area and enter the hapless barracks to be searched, guarding the doors and letting no one in until they have completed their hunt for any sort of forbidden article. Block 7 was searched today.

I carry my diary, as I always have, in my shirt. My barracks has not been hit since my arrival anyway. The Jerries take all our makeshift tools that they can find, any writing or other information that might be revealing, and any food or coal that they can find above the average ration. Then the fellows are allowed to go back in, and many are the forlorn cries that come from that barracks when someone finds a precious possession gone. The rules are funny—wire is contraband, but after you have stretched it for a clothes line or for bedsprings and it is

there in plain view, it isn't bothered; we are not allowed to take nails from the barracks walls, but if you have already used them to make something, nothing is said if the article itself is allowed.

These tools that I mentioned are ingenious adaptations of iron fittings stolen from the doors and windows. Room 10 has a heavy piece of wrought iron hinge that the whole barracks



SEARCH PARTY MEETS SHOWER PARTY

uses as a hammer, Room 9 has a little hacksaw blade which they have mounted in a wood and wire frame, which serves us as a saw. There are two or three "tin-cutters," made by mounting steel strips of hinge on a wooden board. The tin is laid over slits left between the steel pieces and sliced with a knife. That constitutes the tool chest for Block 5, and whenever something is being made, the craftsman runs around and borrows what he needs.

Our scanty supply of kitchenware has been supplemented by several deep pans made from tin cans with these tools. The

Germans give each room a galvanized bucket (in which most of our cooking is done), a dishpan, two tin water pitchers, and nothing else. Each of us has his bowl, cup and spoon, and there are three or four forks and knives in the room, but all the rest of our utensils, the cracker-grinder, potato-masher, powdered milk mixer, etc., are made from tin cans and scraps of wood.

Although my surroundings have changed there is still as



HOT WATER DISPENSARY

much waiting in Army lines as ever. We line up for the pitcher of hot water each room gets once a day, there is a long wait by the gate whenever we go out on a shower party, and there is always a ten or fifteen minute wait at the washroom and latrine. *Und so weiter.*

Sunday, November 5, 1944 The quartet sang during church services today and led the congregation's singing. Church is held between Blocks 7 and 8 in the open air, and is conducted by a British chaplain, Padre Clark, who was captured in the front lines in Italy. The men bring benches and

blankets so that they can huddle together for warmth. When it is raining, we pack into the hallway of Block 8, the minister standing in the center of the building, preaching in the dark. Many ministers back in the States with beautiful churches would envy this padre's congregation, who cheerfully endure cold and discomfort to attend.

We four in the quartet have been doing a lot of practising and are getting some good numbers worked up: "Sweet Sue," "Shoo-Shoo Baby," and "If I Didn't Care," at present. These are not for church services, however! Marple sings tenor, I am the bass, Jim Crooke takes melody, and Hank Preher the baritone. Preher, besides owning a fine voice, has an unusual technical skill in music, and he is our arranger.

Colonel Spicer is in the cooler, as we call the solitary confinement cells here, awaiting court-martial. The other day he addressed us after Roll Call, warning us against being friendly with the Jerries, reminding us of some of their atrocities, and expressing his opinion of them in colorful and very positive terms. The German major and his men were listening, of course, and Spicer is relieved of command and is to be tried for "defaming the German character." The general in charge of all POW camps has come here to set up the trial, and we cleaned our barracks and compound carefully in case he should want to inspect Spicer's compound for evidence of rebelliousness, but we didn't see hide nor hair of him.

Monday, November 6, 1944 We were all surprised this afternoon to see a half-barrel of beer being brought into the barracks for our consumption! After it was divided up, each man had nearly a cupful. It was an insipid brew, the dregs from the recently-bombed Rostock brewery. The older men say that last year they used to have it once a month. There was some discussion about cutting cards in the room so that one man would have it all and perhaps get drunk for our entertainment (anything, and we do mean *anything*, for a laugh!) but each was too curious to taste his, so it was divided.

The alcoholics here occasionally brew up a prune wine with the Red Cross prunes which is said to be a terribly potent beverage. I have no doubt that it is, because it is also said that frequent addiction to the drink leads to bad eyesight. They must be pretty far gone to want liquor that strongly.

It takes all kinds to make a prison camp. There are many nationalities represented here, too. A few French and Polish flyers, about two thousand English, and six thousand Americans are kept in the three compounds. Approximately fifty Russian airmen are prisoners here, but they are kept separate and used as slave laborers, cleaning the latrines, hauling coal and digging ditches.

AS WE SEE THEM

By an English P.O.W.

It really was a rotten break,
The day we found we had to make
That 'chute descent which landed us
Among the Yanks—oh, what a fuss
We would have made if we had known.
In fact, old boy, we'd not have flown!

The things we have, they always take;
They say "cookies" where we say "cake,"
Our "chocolate's" their "candy bar"—
We really don't know where we are!

Strange games they play, with sticks and balls,
Sometimes they utter curious calls
Of "Hubba, hubba, let's get two!"
We don't know what they mean—do you?

With flapping shirts, the Yanks parade;
Sometimes in underpants arrayed,
Or even just in naked skin!
With matted hair, and knees so thin,
Like cavemen of the Old Stone Age,
Or something out of Ripley's page!



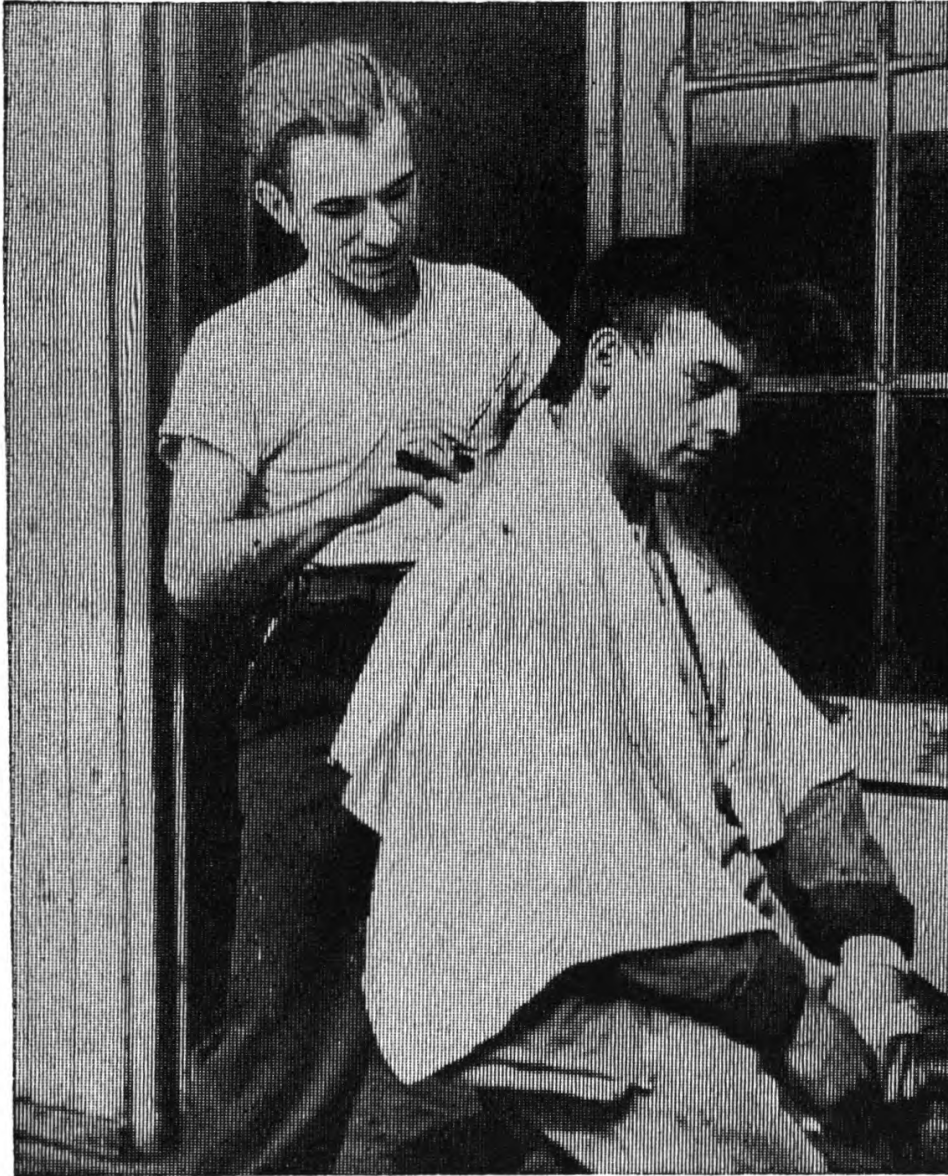
CHAPTER TWELVE

Tuesday, November 7, 1944 There are a number of interesting enterprises going on in this place. Anything and everything can be made from Klim powdered milk cans. Pans, stoves, dustpans, graters, egg-beaters, cracker-grinders, ovens, spatulas, washing machines, cigarette cases, flat-irons, and even a clock which tells time!

Tom Arthur and Joe Berger bought some barber's clippers and scissors from a German for 1,000 smokes and they cut hair at the end of the barracks with a pack of cigarettes as fee. The haircuts suggest that neither one has ever had any previous experience, but who cares how it looks?

Some fellows melt down the tiny drops of lead solder that seal corned-beef cans, fashion molds from clay, and mold flyers' wings to trade for D-bars. I sold my wings for cigarettes and hope eventually to buy a replacement pair from one of these men.

Jack Bowden and Gene Schwab, roommates of mine, formerly had a thriving business in stealing barbed wire, removing the barbs, and making "super-sacks" by stretching the wire out in a bed frame to replace the wooden slats. But I am too late, as the wire-swiping possibilities are few and far between now, so I guess I'll sleep on my wooden bed and like it. I like it all right—nothing like sleep!



TONSorial EXPERT

Wednesday, November 8, 1944 The Jerries tell us that Roosevelt has won the election. No one is greatly surprised, although political arguments have been frequent and

furious. I orated myself one night into the title of "radical thinker."

Yesterday evening an election was held in the barracks all through the camp and it resulted in a Democratic landslide. Thirty men voted for the Prohibition ticket, and there are two schools of thought about them; either they were teetotalers or bootleggers! And, regardless, they are Kriegies now.

The November issue of "O.K." has just reached its public. "O.K., the Oversea Kid" is a four-page newspaper published by the Jerries for Kriegie consumption, and is filled with propaganda ranging from the subtle to the extremely obvious. Everyone waits eagerly to read "Germany Says," a column written by some German who has spent a great deal of time in the States. He employs a chummy, "one American to another" style in trying to soften us up, and there are nearly always a goodly amount of laughs to be gleaned from his faulty English and his beautiful presumption that we look on him as a comrade.

In regard to Thanksgiving, he blithely pens, "Germany cannot assure to you a good Thanksgiving. But back home, is President Roosevelt worried about you? No, he is sitting and eating the good turkey and the plum pudding, and talking to the family. President Roosevelt does not think of the prisoners. He does not care for them!" After reading this, we are supposed to boil with pro-Nazi enthusiasm.

The other day at Roll Call, they announced that all members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity were to report to the orderly room and turn in their names! I did so, but could learn nothing about why a college fraternity list was being made in the middle of Germany. A couple of days later it was explained when Lt. Nick B. Robson called on me. He lives in North One and conceived the idea of getting around to the various compounds and organizing the SAE's for meetings. He said he had contacted twenty or thirty men, but since we are scattered out among the different compounds, it will be difficult to arrange any meeting. Only official details are allowed to move between

compounds. Nick himself came into North Two with a ration detail, but the rest of us will have trouble.

As the result of a series of dazzling maneuvers, I am now the proud possessor of a GI overcoat. I managed to trade the sweater MacAdams gave me for a field jacket, then found a man who had an American and a Polish overcoat and talked him into trading the extra overcoat for this "fine, warm, good-looking field jacket." I have, therefore, added another layer of protective covering, and it still isn't any too much. It's going to be a long, cold winter! And to think that most of the men in my room spent last winter in this same place! What a war!

Thursday, November 9, 1944 I did a lot of work on the volleyball court today. I went out and started alone, borrowing a spade from one of the British boys who clean out the incinerators, but was soon joined by many willing helpers. We cut sidelines, leveled the court off, and sank the posts deeper. I enjoy the games we have and the exercise helps me to sleep at night. I find that those games in the Sig Alph back yard at college have made me a valued player in this league.

It's hard enough to sleep at night anyway, because the nightly parade goes right by my bed and the loose floorboards bounce my head up and down like a rubber ball.

Incidentally, we are now locked up at 8:00 o'clock instead of at 5:30, so it's a lot easier getting over to the washroom to wash up and fill the water-pitchers for the night. Also, it makes the nights seem shorter, and I can see they're going to be *long*—it gets dark about five o'clock now and the winter is only starting.

Friday, November 10, 1944 Well, life goes on, more or less rapidly in spite of its emptiness. K.P. again tomorrow, and we will have a field day, as three men got personal parcels this afternoon, and the larder has benefited greatly by the addition of noodles, soup mixture and spaghetti. K.P. is welcome because it fills up a day with work, something

constructive to do. There's a welcome spirit of competition in trying to make the same old menu taste better and look different.

This is, of course, the greatest rumor-factory in the world and right now we are in the throes of an argument as to whether we might be moving to Sweden now that Germany is itself a combat zone. The Geneva Convention says that we should, but the Germans don't. And, of course, we are periodically excited over Patton's movements.



WASHROOM IN NORTH TWO

"Is the Big Push on yet?" seems to be the question on everyone's lips at each encouraging bit of news. Kriegies are pathetically optimistic.

We have a blackboard outside the barracks on which the daily news is chalked by Brackendorf, the Compound "news analyst." He has a big colored map hanging in the hall on which our advances are traced, and around which newspaper clippings are pasted, with translations from the vindictive German.

Well, there's not much reason to write on this indelicate sta-

tionery daily, as nothing happens daily—each day means little, and everything is remembered by the week or month. I do want to record my Kriegie impressions in a diary, hoping the Germans won't find and confiscate it, so I'll keep it up by the week.

Saturday, November 11, 1944 Armistice Day—so what? Our putrid bugler blew Taps at 11:00 but most of the two minutes of silence were irreverently taken up with comments on his rendition. Wish the nebulous Armistice for this war would hurry up and come.

Omonsky received a personal parcel with devils-food cake mix in it, and we had a delicious cake for supper, with a big stew as the main dish. It was rather redolent of corned beef, and the cake mix was so expanded with K-2 biscuits to make it go around that it was a little hard to recognize, but good.

Tonight, and on a couple of other occasions recently, I have had the great pleasure of hearing classical records supplied by the YMCA in Sweden. This was a three-hour program of Beethoven, Puccini, Handel, Grieg and Saint-Saens. When the program was finished, we spent the rest of the time until Lights Out in playing most of it over again. As I listen to familiar music, my mind drifts away from Barth and I can see so clearly in scenes from the past my family listening to that same music.

The weather has been very cold and wet lately, and we have once or twice had Roll Call inside, or fallen out one barracks at a time, as we did today. Ordinarily, each squadron falls out at the same time in front of its barracks and a major and two non-coms count us, then they have a big conference while we shiver. Either they emerge with the right number or with the sad news that there will be a recount, in which case they start from the beginning again. The process takes about half an hour and is most unwelcome because it takes us away from huddling around the stove.

Sunday, November 12, 1944 Everyone is up in arms about letters and news from the States to the effect that dances and suppers are being given for German POW's there,

and all agree that if they find their families have participated, there will be a royal tongue-lashing administered. It's bad enough to know that those guys are eating the same food our Army gets, living in warm, roomy Army barracks, and traveling by Pullman, while we get black bread and potatoes, are crammed into drafty barracks with very little heat, and usually travel by cattle car. Then, too, there's always the possibility in our minds that we may not last out the war. Execution as hostages is not a remote idea when you consider the German point of view, and we hear plenty of veiled threats.

Many of our crewmates have bailed out only to have their throats cut or be summarily shot upon reaching the ground, or have been beat up by German civilians, while our civilians are said to be baking cakes and giving parties for POW's! Dammit, it's quite a contrast—

Also, a very amusing letter was just received by one boy from his wife, saying she had read an article about returning POW's. We will be "wild animals," and "must be humored." Also, we will be "very shy of the opposite sex," which brought a big laugh from everyone. All things considered, she was most frightened about the peculiar changes likely to be displayed by her homing hubby, and begged for reassurance! Well, I can see this bunch acting as wild animals, and they will probably take a lot of humoring, but the "shy" tag shouldn't prove applicable.

Some of these fellows haven't seen a woman for over a year. Which reminds me, a middle-aged female in Nazi uniform walked by the fence the other day, and nearly everyone in camp ran out to look at her, whistling and calling, whereupon she began strutting like a coy elephant. I am one of the newest Kriegies and I have been down six weeks now; it seems like six years, and I'll be so blissfully happy when we are free again that I have no doubt I'll weep for joy. And I won't be alone.

I keep trying to avoid complaining. There's a sign tacked up in the compound orderly room that says: "I had no shoes, and I complained—until I met a man who had no feet!" A good thought for a Kriegie to remember—all of us are here on borrowed time.

SUPER SACK SAGA

"A bed," you say, and reckon not
On those who gave their time and thought,
And also sweated quite a lot
To make a couch of ease.

Learn, then, stranger, of two smart men
Who craved to smoke and, therefore, when
Their fags ran low began to plan
A means of getting these.

They knew our beds were hard and flat—
There's not much spring to a wooden slat—
They made a plan to alter that,
Sparing backs and knees.

"There's wire to spare in that Jerry fence—
We'll stretch it out until it's tense
Under the sacks, and those with sense
Will see it's bound to please!"

They stole some wire, removed the stings,
And for their hardened beds made springs;
The most bouncy, lovely, lively things
That ever harbored fleas!

Soon they knew that they were set,
For men all hurried in to get
A wire sack—"Well, boys, the cigarette
Will constitute our fees."

Production started and, pack by pack,
The smokes came in to buy a sack,
And soon there were enough laid back
To satisfy their wheeze.

So, stranger, listen as I tell;
And when returned to where you dwell,
Make sure success by following well
Their ingenuity!

Alan H. Newcomb
November 14, 1944



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

December 1, 1944 The first of the month is a good reminder—I had almost forgotten I have a diary. For that matter, interest in everything has been slacking up recently. The Germans have stopped bringing in our Red Cross parcels for the past two weeks, so our meals have been a succession of potatoes, cabbage, rutabaga and black bread. And we had little of our ration left at Thanksgiving, so that occasion was marked only by bitterness and hunger.

The rutabagas here are different from those we have at home. These German ones are big, coarsely grained, colorless things with absolutely no taste at all. Bowden and I are so hungry that we sit beside the stove after Lights Out and chew on cabbage leaves—many of the men can't stomach these cabbages, so they are not so much in demand. They do have a peculiar taste, but at least they fill a little of that aching void. And I can't lie there in bed and go to sleep while I am so hungry. I guess Bowden feels the same way!

I have been spending my evenings recently participating in a little variety show that some of us have organized. We go to a different barracks each evening before Lock-up to present a program in the halls. A tall fellow named Jacobs is the M.C. and he does a couple of good acts; there is a little orchestra of fiddle, accordion and banjo, and the quartet sings several

numbers. I have introduced a new number at *Stalag Luft 1*—"I'll Be Seeing You." It was playing on every nickelodeon in the States when I left there. I heard it on the radio all the time in England and it seems strange to be with a group of Americans who have never heard of it!

The song has caught on quickly. I taught it to the quartet and it is very popular, much in demand at our sessions. Now that I consider it, the tune holds a lot of feeling for me too. Those Tin Pan Alley words have a ring of sincerity and promise in this place and all my last memories of the familiar life I knew are tied up with those words—"I'll be seeing you, in all those old, familiar places that this heart of mine embraces, all day through." I am not surprised that when we sing it, a look of reflection and nostalgic sadness comes over the faces of our audience. It is so easy and such a pleasure to play to these men. Starved for entertainment and laughter, they make the most appreciative audience I have ever seen.

In singing with this show, I have made an unusual friend. He is the accordionist, a little English fellow whom everyone calls "Jimmy." He has been here too long and is "around the Bend," the phrase used to describe someone who goes crazy or becomes simple-minded as a result of confinement. Jimmy is the latter. He has a sweet and friendly disposition, but has evidently lost the ability to think accurately or deeply, and spends all his time carrying an accordion around. It was sent into the camp by the YMCA and given by popular consent to Jimmy, who couldn't play when he came here. In the course of three years and more, he has learned to play brilliantly and is always ready to entertain anyone who wants to hear him.

The whole camp seeks its pleasures where they can be found. The other day the chimney sweeps came around on their work, and hundreds of men spent the whole day watching them. There are two forced laborers from Poland, who wear greasy top hats in what is, as I recall, an age-old tradition of European chimney sweeps. Their friendly smile comes to us through a

coating of dirt and soot on their faces, and they look like the endmen in a minstrel show, although I suppose they never heard of a minstrel show.

Another way of passing time away is to watch the training ships fly over on maneuvers. There are three or four student ships which regularly come over our camp, probably flown by Jerry cadets who want to show off to their grounded enemies.

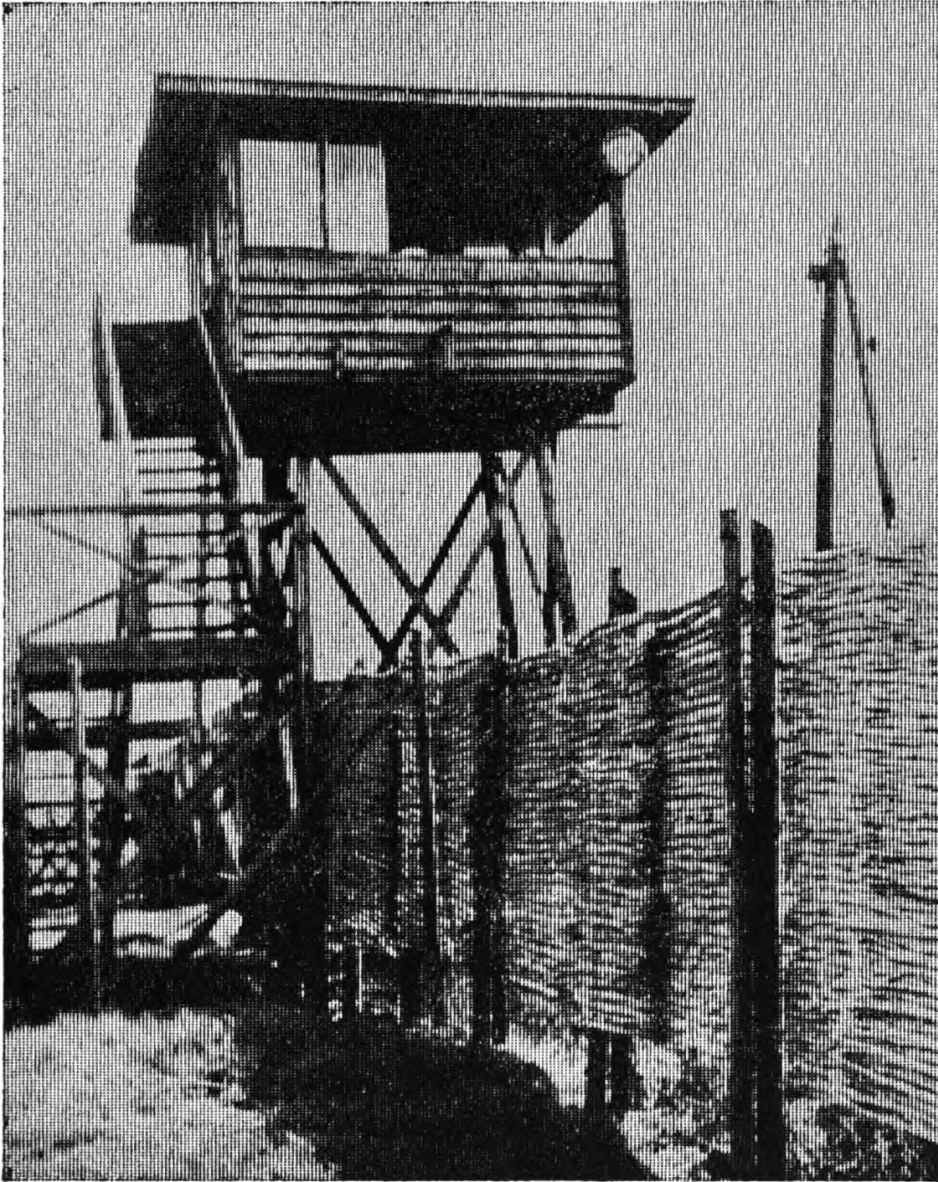


"SWEEP YOUR CHIMNEY, BOSS?"

I have heard that a P-51 sneaked in over the coast one day and shot down two or three training planes—certainly whenever there is an air raid warning, they streak for the ground.

Also, there is an old *Junkers* transport that flies back and forth over our camp in a pattern, serving as a target for the radar "ears" at the Flak School just south of camp. They apparently train operators to track his course, and he spends hours in the air each day. But whenever that siren starts whooping, he dives straight for the ground in unseemly haste. Due to this

decidedly retiring manner, the fellows have named him "*Fear-*



SEHEN VERBOTEN!

less Fosdick" and he stirs up yells of laughter as he scrambles for cover.

We cannot see the Flak School from our Compound, for it

is just outside the South Compound fence. A huge six-story building, it was a big university or military school before the war. Now it is used as a training school for anti-aircraft technicians, most of them young women. They are from all reports a very husky set of females, apparently of the country peasant stock, and the men in the South Compound used to spend so much time standing along their fence watching the activities at the school that the Jerries have woven reeds through the wire so that no one can see out.

The Germans also have a rifle range out at the end of the peninsula, and nearly every day detachments of guards and soldiers march past our fence on their way to drill. As soon as they come in sight, they start marching very precisely and sing some of their Nazi songs. Their singing is pretty good—it should be! Hitler has probably had them marching and singing for ten years. One song lends itself to ridicule very nicely. It is apparently called “Hi-lee, hi-loo,” and the Kriegies delight in mocking them with a falsetto “Hi-leeee, hi-looooo!”

December 25, 1944 I have been neglecting this diary for quite awhile. Even with all the time available, things can be neglected. At any rate, we have had a wonderful Christmas. For several weeks back, we have had no Red Cross parcels, so we lived on potatoes, cabbage and rutabaga, our Thanksgiving dinner. That was a sad affair.

However, more parcels came in this week and we are back to the old schedules. *And*, enough Christmas parcels, No. 2, came in for us to have four parcels to every five men. They contained little cans of turkey, plum pudding, jam, honey, Vienna sausage, potted ham, cheese, *real* butter; nuts, candy, chewing gum, playing cards, pipe, tobacco, cigarettes, and a small game, all in a ten-pound parcel! So we have been having a wonderful feed. Aside from our turkey and cherry pie meal, (there were also cherries and dates in the parcels) we have had date-and-nut cake, jam tarts, cookies, and stuffed dates,

and are all stuffed to the gills right now. The first—and probably the last—time here I have ever been too full to eat more.

Christmas Eve we had a lot of entertainment in the new North Three Mess Hall. By the way, my Compound is now designated as North Two instead of North north. Our new orchestra, quartet, Glee Club, and various artists and performers, good and bad, were the participants. The quartet made a real hit; we are singing well together now.



POKER GAME

After the show, we came back to the room and exchanged presents. Last week we all drew names as children do in grade school, and each made a present for the one whose name he drew. The gifts were most clever and showed a lot of original thought! Osborne received a pawnbroker's insignia to help in his trading; Omonsky, a mustache cup for his embryo mustache; Schwab, a "fourth training phase" Italian Theatre scroll; baldheaded Gose, a GI toupee; Bowden, a model B-17 without elevators, thus settling his elevator argument forever; Weiss,

a little woolly sheep with which to start his farm; Mull, some peas for his P-51, and so on.

I drew Grissom's name and made him a pair of huge earmuffs with big red ears pasted on the outside, and was presented in turn with a pack of Gillette blades and some pipe cleaners from Weiss, with a note saying, "Clean out that horrid, homely pipe! It stinks!" We had a joyous time, and these ramshackle walls have never heard such prolonged, delighted laughter. The lights were on until 1:30, unexpected courtesy of the Jerries, and the occupants of Room Six wore themselves out.

Christmas morning, we had jam tarts with honey and Vienna sausages and real, ground coffee from Weiss' parcel. The big dinner came at 1:00, and at 4:00, after roll call and a walk around the compound, there was a carol service. It was very satisfying in spite of the cold and my chilblains. The other Glee Club basses are Catholics and were attending mass, so I had to sing at the top of my lungs, and was so hoarse at the end that I couldn't have sung another Amen!

The Red Cross parcels had pictures in them too—Currier and Ives prints and photographic pictures from all over the United States, which I have framed in Klim tin and cardboard frames, and hung around the walls of our room.

The new North Three Compound has been opened for two weeks and 150-200 new Kriegies have come in so far to occupy it. They will eat in one big mess hall, as in North One. All are rather pessimistic about the war and say it will be over sometime in July. This new German counter-offensive in Belgium should either appreciably shorten or lengthen the war's course. Obviously, our guards expect the latter, as they are more belligerent and cocky than ever—Germans are always blowing about their secret weapons that will wipe out the Allies in one fell swoop, and they seem to believe it, too.

The news was disheartening, coming as it did in the midst of Christmas and our happiness over the parcels and the cele-

brations we were allowed to have. I came in from one of my long, aimless walks around the perimeter path just before Lock-up and found heated discussion groups filling the hall.

The men here acquire such positive opinions, either along very pessimistic or very optimistic lines, that the arguments get extremely hot. Some say we are sunk, that the Germans have opened up with unknown reserves, that we Kriegies will



NEWCOMB, WRIGHT, ADAMS, MULL
AMUNDSEN, GRISSOM, MacADAMS, GREMORE

be carrying hods of brick to rebuild Berlin the rest of our lives, others insist that this is last minute desperation. I think I agree with both of them! I don't see how we can hold any real opinions here, going on rumors or what the last man to speak said. The news just gave me another little push into the state of resigned silence I seem to be adopting.

December 29, 1944 I have had my picture taken! One of the guards yielded to bribery and brought us a camera, some film and a floodlight bulb. Captain Warren has had a

good bit of experience, so he has been in charge of the project. He took pictures from all the windows and, at night, set up the floods in Room Five after the blackout shutters were closed. All those who wished had their pictures taken in groups of eight, then Warren finished up the roll on some posed shots. Now the Jerry guard is supposed to be developing the film so



OSBORNE, SCHWAB, GOSE, BOWDEN
MacADAMS, LORDAN, OMONSKY, WEISS

that we can get copies of the pictures on our return to the States.

The Jerries sometimes take pictures around here for their own use, but of course we never see those, and if they knew about this film, it would be confiscated. We haven't had a search party in this barracks since my arrival, but you can never tell when we may.

January 28, 1945 About the only time that I remember to write in this alleged diary is at the end of the month when I am filling up my quota of three letters and four

postcards, which presumably arrive in the States in due time.

I don't think I have ever immortalized our New Year's Eve by putting it down on these pages. For ten days before that date, after a stiff discussion on the relative merits of prunes, we mothered a keg of home-brew.

For Kriegie home-brew, take one short bench, nail a wall-cupboard to it on the flat side, and plug the cracks with tar scraped from the barracks roof. Then place in this crude receptacle, sixteen boxes of prunes and sixteen quarts of water, adding sixteen Red Cross rations of sugar slowly. Keep it beside the stove for two weeks, cover it each night with overcoats and the shirt off your back to keep it from freezing (while you do), and speak kindly to the working bacteria each day.

Then put away everything that is breakable, bring in some buckets of water for sluicing down the floor's inevitable desecration, strain the little globules of tar and what is left of the prunes out of this devil's brew, and serve. Serves sixteen. Some were violently ill, others violently "happy." I had only a couple of cups and so escaped either condition.

Most of my evening was spent over at the North Three mess hall, where two performances of our variety show were put on. The Glee Club sang "Those Pals of Ours," "Marianina," "Vive L'Amour," and "Embraceable You." The quartet sang "Old Rockin' Chair," with Newcomb giving an Ink Spots' bass monologue on the second verse, "Shanty Town," "I'll Be Seeing You," and a 1945 version of "Sweet Adeline." It all went off very well, a two-hour show in its entirety. After wishing everyone a Happy New Year (may it be better than the last!) I went to bed.

At night, Gremore and I regularly move our beds into the room, under the table, in an attempt to keep warm. I have been issued two pairs of Red Cross longhandled underwear and was given a suit of flannel pajamas by Ray Mull, all of which helps, and all of which is usually on me.

We have had many lean days recently, since Red Cross par-

cels have been darn few and far between. Just steady potatoes, cabbage, or rutabagas are pretty tiresome, but they keep life in the old bones. Have had many heavy snowfalls, and right now the deepest to date is being blown around by a gale of wind. The temperature is below zero now, and is always freezing cold, so I hug the stove most of the time, usually winning the rush into the room after Roll Call. Had chilblains blooming in my toes again for a few days, but have managed to get rid of them.

Now I am up to date and can proceed with current doings. Four days ago, we received orders to vacate two rooms in each barracks. Fifteen hundred POW's from Posen, Poland are supposed to be coming in here *on foot!* Due to the advance of the Russians, they're being evacuated. Our room lost the drawing that was held, as did Room 2, so I have moved down to Room 10 at the invitation of George Marple, director of the Glee Club. There are nineteen of us in that one room now.

I was to put my bed on the top of a double-decker, and did so, but Williams, the man in the bottom tier, offered to trade places with me, so I now have a lower sack. My shelves and pictures are on the wall and I am all settled. Because I technically have no overcoat and was careful not to mention the one I traded for, I was issued a third blanket, and it helps out immeasurably. A gale of wind whines in from the window and wall by my bed, but I have papered the wall with flattened Red Cross boxes, and that cuts out most of the blast. And an elaborate system of cardboard troughs keeps any water from dripping on my blanket.

So here I still am, folks . . . getting swell news of the Russian invasion of *der Vaterland*. They are ninety miles from Berlin today—everyone is yelling "Come on, Joe," at Roll Call lately, griping the Jerries no end. I only hope we can get out of here in one piece.

TIME AND A HALF

Even if I liked it here,
I wouldn't want to stay;
We have to add so many blessed
Hours to each day.

The only thing that seems to be
In surplus, fit to waste,
Are minutes that we'd rather see
Go by in tumbling haste.

We save, and scrimp, and when we're through
There's still a big supply
Of just one thing, these stubborn weeks
That simply won't rush by.

Even if I liked it here
I wouldn't want to stay;
We have so many extra little
Seconds in each day.

Alan H. Newcomb



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

February 8, 1945 Yesterday our barracks was the subject of a search party, and we were caught flat-footed. They haven't hit Block 5 for so long that the men had become careless and left things in the barracks during Roll Call. Several extra light bulbs, some extra potatoes, a saw and a hammer, and many "Logbooks" were taken. As usual, I had this toilet-paper diary tucked inside my shirt, but they found the notebook which contains my collection of poems written by the Kriegies and took that away. It was returned today, minus several pages which held derogatory references to the Jerries; in fact, I might say they were downright insulting!

Our showers have been cut down from the one-a-week affair to one every other week, but it is so cold that no one particularly cares. My feet nearly freeze while standing and waiting for the party to go out and return, because my shoes are soaked with water most of the time.

A few of the hardy actually take a bucket out to the wash-room and take baths in cold water! The poor fish turn red and blue by turns; I think they do it mostly for the effect of wonderment and awe it creates in us weaklings who would rather be dirty than frozen stiff.

Another method of cleansing has been put into effect lately too. The Germans, in a recent inspection, have found several

rooms inhabited by lice and all those men have to take up their beds and walk to the South Compound, where the delouser is running overtime!

I am now the proud possessor of a magnificent handle-bar mustache that has taken many weeks of fond cultivation. It is so blond that it couldn't be seen at first, but now the total mass of hair makes itself apparent and I am beginning to look like



SEX STALKS THE STAGE

a Swedish diplomat! The ends are carefully waxed with soap, and curling these gives me something to do. Over half the men grow mustaches just to keep occupied, and the loving care expended on some of them with toothbrushes and soap is laughable.

The other day I saw a remarkable production of "The Man Who Came To Dinner." The script was written down from memory by two fellows in North One Compound, a director was chosen, and they went into rehearsal. The show was put on in the communal mess hall they have there, using tables as a

stage. Everything used in the production, scenery, costumes, makeup and props, was improvised from available materials and was extremely ingenious. Red Cross boxes, sheets and blankets, wire, nails, and boards stolen from the barracks were all so cleverly employed that the result was amazing! Our whole Compound was permitted to go over on parole and there has been little talk of anything else but the play. The men who took women's parts were very convincingly feminine and received a full share of wolf-calls from the audience. At present, there is talk of our borrowing the script and putting on our own show.

February 12, 1945 Cold, snowy, and monotonously hungry. As an illustration of how strongly the inmates of this little institution feel about food, one man was caught last week in the ration room, tucking some potatoes in his shirt. It was discovered upon investigation that he had been frequently climbing up over the rafters above the rooms and letting himself down into the ration room. Under his bed, hidden for future consumption, he had several pieces of bread and a Red Cross box full of potatoes.

When the camp heard about it, everyone who could get near him took a few swings, and he is now walking around with two very black eyes, a puffed-up nose and cauliflower ears. He is rather a social pariah, and no one wants to even speak to him. I imagine that those who bring in and distribute the rations are "knocking down" all the time, but of course there's no way to tell about that.

Because food has been so short lately, we have a new system in the room. Most of the fellows have been standing by the table and grabbing the bowls that look a little more generous as soon as permission is given (I among them, and usually in the front row!) so now we have to sit on our beds or stay two feet away from the table until the word is given, and then the grand rush starts.

Perhaps I have never mentioned that all the food is served into the bowls and all the drink poured out before anyone can

start eating, in order that each man will have an equal share and there will be no leftovers for someone to add to his portion. The K.P.'s are given the privilege of licking the pans used in cooking.

There was an attempted suicide in the North latrine the other day and the Germans have taken him away to the hospital. It seems he couldn't stand the thought of some disfiguring wounds he has, and became depressed during this bleak period we are in, so he slashed his wrists and temples with a razor blade. However, since no one can be alone for more than a minute or two in such crowded quarters, he was discovered and the bleeding was stopped before the poor guy could die.

I have noticed that whenever someone begins to build up tension and become morose, his roommates unobtrusively go to work and kid him out of it, but apparently this one was too far gone.

The Germans have a new and annoying way of keeping us busy now and we have been forced to put a Goon Guard at each end of the barracks. Several times each day, two German soldiers wander into the barracks with what is evidently supposed to be an innocent expression, and then suddenly duck into two or three rooms in succession with a triumphant "we've caught you" look. We call them the "Snoopers" and they have nearly caught prohibited activities going on once or twice, so the guard has been doubled and I have it twice as often as before.

I have just about finished my Kriegie "Logbook," on which I have been working for several months. It contains pictures, poems, songs and various souvenirs, some of them original and some of them copied. I borrow colored pencils from the old Kriegies who have them and get my paper from the news-officer, who lifts a supply now and then from the main orderly room.

Also, I have been doing a lot of wood-carving with my old razor blades and some little chisels I made from the tines of a

broken fork. So far, I have carved out the pilot's wings of several different countries represented here, and an Eighth Air Force insignia. I plan to mount them on a polished board and stain them with *ersatz* coffee when they are finished.

We obtained the script of "The Man Who Came To Dinner" and had tryouts recently. I was cast as Miss Preen, the comedy nurse, and we had some rehearsals in the library room, but we have decided to drop the idea. The weather is so bad and the food so short that no one feels like leaving his room, and there is really no place to put it on here in our Compound. Then, too, there aren't enough men interested in the technical end to overcome the difficulties of production. To top it all off, some Lt. Colonel is trying to get the part of "Sheridan Whiteside" away from the 2nd Looney who is playing it.

I fell into the trough leading to Lake Latrine on my way to rehearsal one evening and am still being razzed about the spectacle I presented on returning to the room, looking like a miserable and half-drowned puppy. What's the use?

March 1, 1945 Yesterday was my 24th birthday, but the occasion passed without my remembering it. Coincidentally, we did have a prune and cracker cake, which was a celebration in itself. Day before yesterday, we got our first Red Cross parcels in over a month, one to every four men, a fourth issue. We have, therefore, been on only the German ration, which has been cut down again, of a seventh of a loaf of bread and three potatoes a day to each man. We were without salt for three weeks and at present have only a little bit for cooking; less than a cupful, and no more coming. I never before realized how much salt means to a meal.

The coal ration has been cut for the past two months from sixteen to nine boxes per barracks, and we send out details, as many rooms do, to salvage cardboard from the incinerators. The 5,000 civilian refugees in Barth who arrived at the time of the Russian offensive have depleted our coal pile alarmingly. If no more comes in, we shall be without any in a couple of weeks.

Also with the Russian offensive came the failure of our electricity, as they captured the main power site for this dis-



LANDSCAPE AT BARTH

trict. The water has been off more than half the time, and we have been boiling snow for drinking water and washing in snow

"as is." We have had no lights for three weeks, and from all indications shall have none in the future.

So at night, tediously long even when the lights were on, we lie on our beds or sit around the table talking spasmodically about anything that comes to mind. Each man gets a talking streak every now and then about his home town and everyone else listens patiently to these interminable reminiscences about entirely unfamiliar and uninteresting places. I usually get a seat by the window and stare out at the spotlights playing over the compound, thinking of the guard, "Now, *there* is a man who has something to do!"

The stars are beautiful whenever the night is clear, and I sit there and smoke my pipe, trying to turn my thoughts away from the lack of food, coal and light. These nights are so empty and induce such a feeling of despondency and melancholy in me that at times I almost lose my faith in the future, in the ultimate rightness of things, but I mustn't—that's the thing that keeps me going.

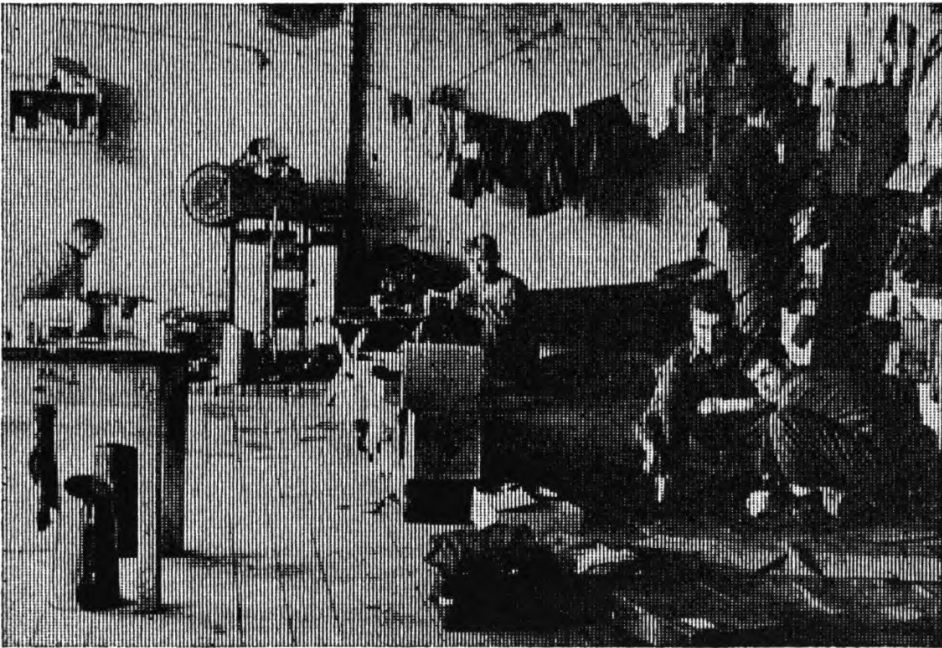
In the last month we have received four or five thousand POW's into the fold, brought here from camps overrun by the Russians. Many were liberated in the advance, but these were rushed west with many privations and indignities.

Twelve of us went back into Room 6 when they didn't show up right away, but once again have had to move out. I am again in Room 10, now sleeping in the hall, having forfeited my lower sack by moving. We are now twenty in here, and they have put twenty Limey sergeants in my old room. They are sleeping on the floor and will probably continue to do so. POW No. 2 of the war is among them! Shot down in 1939, a long, long time ago! An English Lieutenant Colonel that I talked to was also a prisoner of the Jerries in the last war! So to him it's an old story.

Due to the shortage of food, we are having only two meals a day. One is at ten or eleven in the morning, one at 4:30 in the afternoon, and that eighteen and a half hours between meals

is mighty hungerin'. All Kriegie conversations now concern food as known at home. A good, mouthwatering time is had by all; women, the classic Army topic, are forgotten in the discussion of *food*! Boy, am I going to eat when I get back!

If we get back, of course. The people in Berlin are said to be rioting for food, so how long will they continue to feed us? Germany must be a pitiable sight if half the news we get is



SOLID COMFORT, KRIEGIE-STYLE

true. The only Jerries I don't feel sorry for are the POW's in the States, snug, smug and well fed.

In the last week of February there was an inspection made of our camp by the Swiss Red Cross and they pronounced us as good or better off than many of the others. For some reason, we had to clean up everything and get ourselves all spruced up. I can't see why we should make a good impression on these inspectors—why not look bad? It's the way we look most of the time and they might as well have a true picture. There were

two inspectors who roamed around, escorted by very polite and obsequious Jerry officers.

Henry hoped that he might get some word in regard to his baby, which should be several months old by now if things went all right at home, so he arranged an interview and they promised to send word to his wife that he is all right, and to get word back as to his wife's welfare and whether the little rascal is a boy or a girl. Henry is consumed with curiosity, and no wonder! Although his conversation is always full of worries and griping, I think he has a lot of faith and endurance under that front, so I just laugh at him and kid him along. He is still in Block 7, but Tom Davis found an opening and moved over to my barracks, down in Room 13.

Night before last, there was a four-hour aid raid. Just at its end, a twin-engine ship came down over the camp, circling at about 200 feet and strafing something with machine gun fire. I haven't been so frightened since the RAF raids I sweated out in the Münster jail. It's really spine-chilling to hear those guns chattering just over your head when you're lying in bed, completely defenseless. If I ever arrive safely back home, I'll have plenty to thank the Lord for—I do now. He has saved me from death many times in this last year.

Well, that's everything up to date again. I have finished my logbook, "Vacation With Pay," and bound it together in tin-can covers. Everyday that title seems more and more ironical. Oh, for a hamburger and a milkshake!

GERMAN RATION FOR PRISONERS OF WAR

Bread	8 1-3 oz. per day
Potatoes	16 oz. per day
Horsemeat	4 oz. per week
Ersatz Margarine	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz. per day
Barley	1 1-3 oz. per week
Dried rutabaga	5 oz. per week
Sugar	4 oz. per week
Cheese	2-3 oz. per week
Ersatz coffee	2-3 oz. per week

This was the theoretical diet published by the German authorities. The bread and potatoes were always received in approximately these proportions. Such things as cheese, sugar, and margarine, not so frequently. Meat was issued about every two months, but the poundage was made up in bones of ancient horses.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

March 10, 1945 The belts are drawn still a little tighter, but nobody thinks there will be any relief in the food situation until we are freed and can leave this boneyard they call Germany. To pass the time and to acquire a more objective outlook on food, I have compiled a list of more than two hundred dishes I remember as being good (what isn't good?), which I plan to present to Mother within the first five minutes of our meeting, with instructions not to step out of the kitchen until the list is exhausted.

My manly frame is the subject of much merriment and mock cries of horror whenever I take my shirt off. Tom Gose always comes up, pokes around my ladder-like ribs, and pronounces his verdict, always the same, that I'll be dead before morning. And I used to think I was skinny before!

There are no more inspections except for a cursory glance around by the stouter of the senior officers every week or so. Also, calisthenics went by the board when the first shortage began to be felt, so Roll Call doesn't entail anything more than standing in the rain or snow, as the case may be, and shivering.

Tempers are growing rather short in these days when we are all cooped up in the room around the stove and I often go out for walks around the compound in order to be alone for a while. Of course, everyone else has the same idea, so the perimeter

path is crowded, but I can gain a certain feeling of isolation and do a lot of thinking.

My reminiscences of earlier and happier times are so frequent that I am almost able to live in the past and absent my mind from the unpleasant present. Leaning against the back wall of the washroom, I can look out over the fences and watch the sun make its fiery exit through the pine forest to the west of us, and I spend each clear evening out there, wishing I were artist enough to paint that familiar scene and have it with me forever. There's a quieting reassurance in the continued beauty of a sunset, whatever the surroundings.

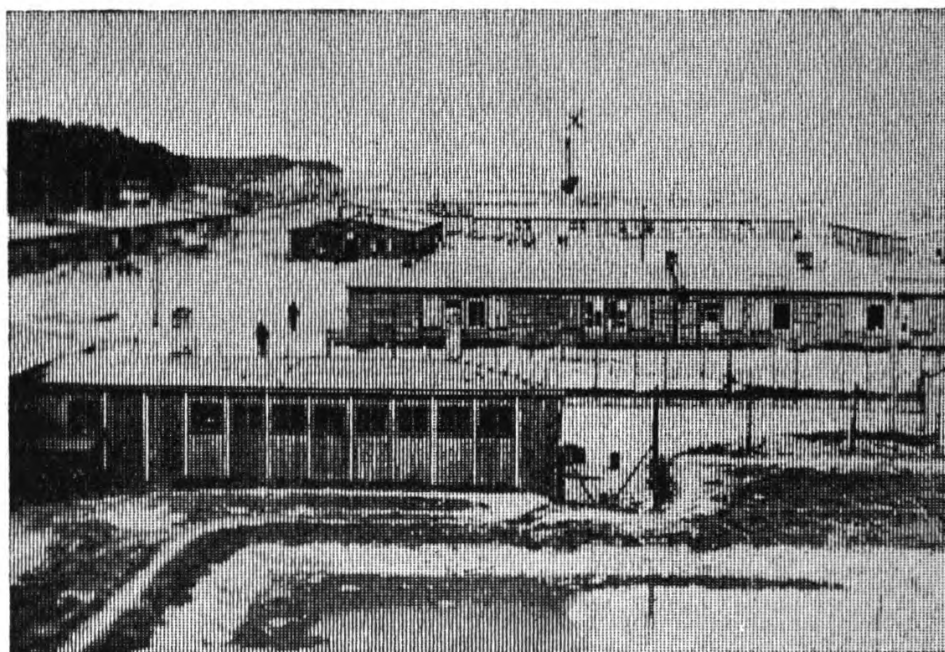
Perhaps I should be thinking of the future instead of trying to lose myself in dreams, but it is so indefinite and vaguely threatening that I'll let it take care of itself. There's life in the old boy yet and I hope it has a long time to run *after* getting out of this hole. If it does, it's bound to be better than this. A common catchword nowadays is—"Things can't get any worse, so what the hell's the use of worrying?" Nevertheless, every little mannerism and peculiarity of each man in the room is so very familiar and so persistent that I have to get out and away for a little time each day.

I have a new system of putting my shoes on top of the stove each night to dry out a little before the fire goes out, and my feet are in better shape. I think I have licked those chilblains, a major victory!

March 14, 1945 Several times lately, with the skies clearer than usual, we have been given a buzz job by the Jerry fighter pilots, who come over from some nearby field and roar proudly over our heads. The training ships have almost entirely disappeared; I imagine that Germany has neither the time nor the gasoline to train any more pilots. Two or three times we have seen their jet-propelled 263's streaking across the sky, but they stay pretty high and go so fast that they are hard to see. I suppose that by this time they are hitting our ships along with the other standard fighters. "Fighter at 9—

pardon me, 3 o'clock—I think!" Someone who came in from my Bomb Group said that they were hit by fighters on the Münster raid, after I went down, but he didn't know of any losses, so I doubt if it was a real attack.

Nagel's crew, from my squadron, was shot down the same day we were, and at the same time; he and his co-pilot and



ARROW POINTS TO MY BARRACKS

bombardier recently arrived from the hospital. He has several flak wounds and so does Holland, but they are not serious. Over half the men here are entitled to the Purple Heart and some have been seriously wounded or burned, but most of the worst cases are repatriated. At this point, I'd almost give a leg to be sent back to the States, but of course, that's wrong. I am still darned lucky, and we should come out all right.

Palm Sunday, March 25, 1945 And I did *try* to go to church today, but reached the Vorlager gate too late to be passed into North Three mess hall, where all services are

now held. So I sat out in the sun all afternoon and listened to "La Bohème," our first record concert in months.

The last three days have been beautiful. Instead of clouds and sleety rain, the sky has been clear and the sun warm, despite a lingering chill in the breeze. So we have ventured out and exposed our pasty-white faces to a little Vitamin C—or is it D? May we keep on having nice days—takes our minds off the gnawing pangs, anyway. Still no Red Cross parcels, of course, and the German ration has been cut again.

For breakfast we have two slices of thin cardboard going under the name of toast, and a mug of black *ersatz* coffee. For lunch, a half Klim tin of hot water flavored with rutabaga and laughingly called "soup." Potatoes and dried rutabaga gravy constitute our supper. Once a week, we have a dried bread and barley "cake" with a little sugar syrup. A cow has the right idea, chewing food over and over again—it lasts longer that way.

We were in pretty bad shape for food until some more potatoes came in. Now we are almost out of rutabagas, so it will soon be just bread and potatoes. Today we get our every-five-weeks ration of rancid horsemeat, usually just bones and enough meat to flavor a gravy; but my imagination claims that I feel much stronger after a horsemeat meal.

The subject of bread has become a touchy one. If the slices are not of equal thickness, if one man feels that he has a smaller piece than the next, there is quite likely to be a big row raised. Every morsel seems precious, so we have delegated a man to do the slicing. Dan Isgrig has the job, not an easy one, of slicing this hard, crumbling bread in exact proportions, thicker slices toward the end of the loaf and thin ones in the middle. It takes all of one's strength to get a decent slice with the sharpened table knife we must use.

Each room has been assigned a plot of the open ground by the fence to spade up as a garden. There are some seeds sent in by the Red Cross and we are hopefully planting—hopeful

that the war won't last long enough for anything to come up. Energy is so shortlived that it took all twenty of us a couple of days, working in turns, to spade up our ten by twenty foot plot of ground.

The whole camp is making menu books, lists of things they want to eat if they ever get home, new recipes and lists of favorite restaurants. I, for one, am going to eat twenty-four hours a day on everything edible. I doubt whether I'll ever again be able to pass a bakery without going in.

We have received orders to prepare for evacuation in the near future, meaning a march to another camp farther removed from the front lines than this; on these rations, that march would really be pathetic. We are all skinny and listless and I black-out whenever I happen to change position suddenly, as in standing up. Many times I have to hang on to the bedpost after getting up, waiting for my head to clear. The Russians at Stettin are only eighty miles away, though, and if they start northwest, so will we. We're all hoping that it won't be necessary to move, but everyone's making knapsacks or back-packs, just in case.

Quite a wave of optimism after a long dry spell came with the news of all the Rhine crossings yesterday and today. Formerly, I could get a shot in the arm by going down the hall to Tom Arthur's room. He is so incurably optimistic and persuasive that it is a joy just to talk to the guy. And everytime some little advance is made or some new drive started, he is full of a complete theory as to why "this is it!" Now he claims that the Allies will be here in ten days! I can't get hopped up as I used to any more, though; just keep hoping and praying. This weak sister was never designed for adventure, I'm afraid.

The Germans installed loudspeakers in each barracks about a month ago, and now broadcast Jerry news programs two or three times a day. And at ten o'clock, as we are settling down for the night, the *Horst Wessel* song or *Deutschland über Alles* is played to remind us of where we are!

I have made a very accurate map, copied from the big one that Brackendorf has hanging outside Block 7, and I keep the advances marked up in colored pencil each day. It is hanging on the door and the fellows in the room have reached the point where they don't go out into the hall to listen to the news any more. They just lie on their beds and wait until I come in to mark up my map, asking me what has happened. So I have turned into a news commentator of sorts.

The Glee Club gave its concert last week, twice for this compound and once for North Three. There wasn't too much interest, as everyone is too weak to take much interest in anything. Several men quit the Glee Club because they "weren't up to it." Personally, it has helped me to pass the time and forget the discomforts of life à la Kriegie.

The mess hall was cold as an Arctic air strip and our feet were numb, but the program went off well. I was M.C. and announcer and sang in the Glee Club and double quartet. Major Fisher wanted us to take it to North One, but we were all tired out and therefore refused. Not enough food to entertain North One.

Well, it's time for Roll Call again. Now that the days are longer, we fall out at 8:15 and 4:00. Lockup is at 8:00 P.M. and we have had lights from 8:00 to 9:30 the last few nights, an unexpected pleasure. Air raids nearly every night keep my nerves in a tizzy. I can't seem to sleep when I know there's one on, so I sit on my bed and talk to Parke Wright, who also sleeps in the hall and also has "siren-willies." The Eighth came over in full strength last week, but we couldn't see them because of an overcast. New Kriegies shot down over Berlin came in—they had ham and eggs a *week* ago in England! Ambrosia!

TO AN ELEGANTE CAPORAL

(manufacture en France)

When I have fears that I may cease to smoke,
Because my ration for the week is gone,
I look around for some unwary bloke
To grant a Camel or a Capstan loan;
And, having failed, turn to you,
Oh, Elegante Caporal so true!

That combination straw and sawdust blend!
I clear my throat, strike, light and draw;
My roommates raise the windows, air the room,
And, one by one, so silently withdraw,
Unable to appraise your rare perfume.
But I will stay by you, my trusted friend,
Until the Monday rations come again!

Unknown P.O.W.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945 And what a joyous Easter! Just a week ago, on March 26th, we were starving along on cut German rations (I don't weigh over a hundred and twenty five), only slightly aroused from our lethargy by news of the new Rhine offensive. But I'll never forget that date because in the evening Colonel Zemke, who has been camp Commanding Officer for some time, called over the fence from North One to tell us that 2000 Red Cross parcels had come in!

We never expected to see another parcel, but all week they have been coming in daily and we now have 76,000 in and are on the old one-a-week ration. Everyone's been stuffing himself and today we had the huge meal we've been saving up for; Spam loaf, mashed potatoes and gravy, black bread croquettes with cheese on them, and a Klim-cherry jam pie. For awhile I thought I was going to be sick as so many are now because of the unaccustomed rich food, meat, cheese, etc., but that has passed off and now I have a glorious feeling of well-being.

All this week, mail and personal parcels have been coming in again, we hear that the Americans are rolling across Germany at top throttle, life in general is wonderful, although no personals have come to our room as yet. The Jerries say we are to have a batch of 2000 letters for the whole camp to be censored by Tuesday, and I am really sweating one for me. I

have just celebrated (yeah!) my six-months-shot-down anniversary and should be hearing from home soon.

Morale has skyrocketed from the depths, and once more you can see fellows laughing and singing—and even exercising! It now is apparent that the recent German losses have made the Jerries eager to have us in good shape and comparative contentment when the end of the war comes. We understand that there was actually a conference at Dr. Goebbels' estate near Berlin for medical officers from all the accessible camps in Germany. They were magnificently wined and dined and asked about their prisoners' health. Our senior medical officer, Col. Henkey, has just returned with the news that we are to have a constant supply of parcels from Lübeck, ninety miles east of here. Also, the High Command was surprised to hear that we are still at beautiful Barth-on-the-Baltic. It seems that orders were issued some time ago for our evacuation on foot to Weimar and then by train to Nürnberg. Of course, Patton is now even closer to Nürnberg than are the Russkies to here, so we'll probably stay awhile. Uncle Joe is still ninety miles away at Stettin and has seemingly settled down there to raise a family.

For over a month we have been combing the incinerators for any combustible trash to keep our stove going enough for cooking. Today, fourteen carloads of coal, unquestionably a tremendous effort on the part of the German High Command at this stage of the war, came in, so now our room can stop smelling like the incinerator.

Three days past, the evacuees who were brought in several weeks ago were moved around; Pete Keryan and Wally Littrell were put in this compound, in Block 9. We have had several visits already and they tell me that Stedman, the radio operator, recovered from his wound and was evacuated on foot from their camp.

I sent them some cigarettes, sugar and soap. Three of them spent seven days during the cold weather, riding in a crowded boxcar with only a loaf of bread and a few sips of water. Many

of those men are losing feet or ears from frostbite. Actually, we in this camp have been extremely fortunate. From what we hear, thousands of Kriegies have been marched long distances in freezing weather at the point of a bayonet, and hundreds have died from exposure or been crippled for life. Cold and hungry though we have been at times, it should leave no permanent effects.

Well, my spirits are away up again, and I am hoping to see home soon. In the meantime, for once I'm full of food. Had a very fine church service today. The octet sang and Padre Mitchell gave us a wonderful sermon on our future life and work, cautioning that the things we've been through here should be a challenge and a driving force. I took communion, as I did on Monday; it has more significance for me now than ever before. I think there are very few atheists in a prison camp, just as in fox holes.

New Kriegies have been coming in regularly, guys who left the States in 1945, and they report that treatment of men who are shot down is much improved over what we met. Seems that the handwriting on the wall is coming out a little clearer for the master race to read.

There's the warning light. To bed, to bed, on a full stomach! Kriegie life, where is thy sting?

April 6, 1945 Replete as I am with a wonderful meal, complete with dessert, I feel an urge to write down more of our change in fortune. It's marvelous what a difference a little food can make; especially that great delicacy, Spam, which I have heard is scorned by our troops. Egad, men! Enjoy that savory Spam!

With Red Cross parcels and the daily Allied advance through Germany, spirits in camp soar higher each day. I suppose our food is still inadequate, being limited to parcels and potatoes for the most part, but George Marple is doing a superb job of cooking. Tonight we had two hamburgers each, of grated horsemeat, topped with melted cheese and tomato sauce dis-

tilled from heated C-rations, and buns baked from *ersatz* bread crumbs. Dessert was a Kriegie bread pudding with raisins in it, D-bar sauce, and "whipped cream" made with *ersatz* oleo, Klim and sugar—really delicious.

Trading has reached an unprecedented new high. Tobacco and cigarettes have depreciated greatly in value since parcels started coming in. The D-ration chocolate bar is now the medium of exchange. Watches sell for 10-15 D-bars, wings are one to two D-bars, pipes the same, and the bar is worth 15 packs of smokes, 4 cigars, or a pack of pipe tobacco.

I have been making little "Kriegie-campaign" ribbons in the hope of selling some. They are exhibited in the Tobacco Exchange, but I haven't been over to check up on them. I use scraps of red and green felt from sewing kits, bits of tin, and pins. Price; one-half a D-bar or equivalent food points; half a can of jelly, cheese or sugar, or one-fourth can of Klim.

The Germans, in pursuance of their oh-so-welcome appeasement policy, have been bringing in many American personal and tobacco parcels today. After a long wait, our room hit *six*, all full of food. Dried apples, soup mixture, a box of muffin mix, sugar, spice, cocoa, tea—*beaucoup* goodies!

We are going to eat like kings, and the wonderful thing is that it looks like we'll soon be going home—any Stateside meal would be a banquet now. Spam is so delicious that I can't imagine what a steak would taste like!

Max Schmeling visited our Compound the other day on what was obviously a good-will tour, giving autographs and pictures to anyone who would take them. As usual these days, it was raining, so I didn't go out to see him. I am nursing a chest cold lately.

I don't think I have mentioned that our guard personnel has changed completely. All our *Luftwaffe* men, Noyes, Alfie, Limburg, Ernie, Humbert and the rest have been rushed off to the front lines and their places taken by *Wehrmacht* officers and *Volksturm* Postern, from forty to seventy years of age. They

are patently the bottom of the Nazi G.I. barrel, but they still have the guns. A poor fellow in the South Compound was shot and killed the other day when he stepped outside the barracks during an air raid. Another was shot during a later raid, but he is said to be recovering. Pretty damn rough to be so near going home and then get it. We head for indoors on the double now when the sirens blow, as they do almost every day.

April 14, 1945 Today I have reached the heights of happiness since arriving here; my first word from home, in the form of three cartons of Lucky Strikes! It fills me with delight at last to *know* that the family has news of my safely becoming a POW. Until now, in my mind, I have still been "missing in action," although they must have received word months ago. Six months and fourteen days without contact with home—now I am hoping even more for a letter in the near future. But then, we all hope to be actually going home in the near future; the Americans and Russians are less than one hundred miles apart. The news of President Roosevelt's death came yesterday, and we're wondering if it will affect the progress of the war.

Last night Major Fisher came over from the "wheels" barracks and told George and me that they wanted the quartet. It seems that Colonel Wilson and his roommates in the next room have been criticizing the singing that goes on in Fisher's room, so he wanted us to sneak in and play a practical joke. We rounded up Jim and Hank and quietly slipped into the room. Then Fisher and the others began discussing, in a loud voice, what they should sing, decided on "Old Rockin' Chair," and the quartet went into action. Silence from the next room. They talked some more, we sang some more, and finally the cagey Wilson's reaction came floating through the wall, "Sounds just as bad as ever!"

We retired in dismay.

I spent three hours over in the South Compound today, taking part in a big three-compound concert with our streamlined

Glee Club cut down to the sixteen best voices, and with the quintet. We were definitely the hit of the program and surprised the singing groups from the older compounds. Colonel Greening is planning a big Kriegie Exposition to tour the States after repatriation and it looks as if we're "in" if his plan goes through. It sounds like a good deal. He wants to rush us home, have a quick leave, and then tour the States with a musical show and exhibition.



KRIEGIE CRITICS

I was visiting with Arthur Segars the other day and we began to talk over our mutual friends from RTU in Pyote. It was a real shock to realize how many are dead. Out of our single flight there, which was a small fraction of the whole group, Sicca, Speed, Hanlon, Villaire, and many others are gone, and there are only a few we've heard about. Someone brought word in that Arthur's regular crew, Henderson, Oosterhof, and Smitty, finished their missions and were back home in time for Christmas. Egad! When the unhappy Kriegie considers

what might have been—oh well, this little gold bar has been on my collar for so long that I'd feel lost if it changed color.

Incidentally, in a moment of hunger, I sold my lieutenant's bar for half a D-bar and made a substitute out of a piece of tin can as I munched on the chocolate. Those longed-for days of unlimited food and unlicensed eating are pretty close now. Let's get this war over, and everyone's worries will vanish; that's the way it looks from here.

KRIEGESGEFANGENER KELLY

"Kelly, get your barracks bag—
The shipping list is here!
We're sailing on the first tide
For home of yester-year!"
But Kelly stirred no muscle
To join the homing flocks;
He was parked before a tiny stove,
Beside a Red Cross box.

"Kelly, we're a-sailing!
The bitter war is done!
We're heading for the States, boy,
To sweethearts and to fun!"
But Kelly turned a deaf ear,
His stubbornness uncleft:
"I should sail for anywhere
With all these groceries left!"

It's a sad tale they tell these days
Along the Bowery streets;
Of Kriegesgefangener Kelly
And his parcel full of meats.
For some may love adventure,
And some love curly locks,
But Kriegesgefangener Kelly
Loves his faithful Red Cross box!

Unknown P.O.W.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

April 19, 1945 Today has been one of the most eventful of my life. This afternoon we had mail call, and my name was called for the first time. Of course I was overjoyed, and I ran around waving the letter and rejoicing to the world in general.

It was Eleanor's letter of January 22nd, with the news of my brother Bob's death in an auto accident last November 11th. I can still hardly believe that it is true. It's hard to imagine that kind, generous Bob isn't living any more.

For awhile the shock left me very shaken and keyed-up, but I lay down on my bed and let myself weep a little, thought it out honestly, prayed and finally fell asleep. Physically, I feel better now, but I still can't realize that he is dead. It must have been a terrible blow to the family, already worrying about me. I hope and pray that the notice of my safety got home before it happened. Now, more than ever, I've *got* to get back home out of this and try to take a part of his place. A hopeless task, since he was so lovable and his many kind thoughts so constantly apparent to us.

How ironical that I should live through flying combat without a scratch and that he should meet his end back home. But God knows His business better than I—I pray He'll take me back home to the folks. So many things can happen



COMPOUND COMMANDER

here that all I can do is wait and hope. I wish I were worthier.

I looked back in the sheets of my diary to find November 11th, and find that on that night I heard a wonderful program of music. I can recall vividly the peace and satisfaction I felt on that night, listening to familiar strains of the classical music that Bob loved so well. And I thought of him a great many times during the evening; that, then, was my "goodbye" to him. It couldn't have been more appropriate. And I can't feel that he is gone—perhaps he can be even nearer to me now.

April 27, 1945 We are finally getting into the war again, and with a vengeance. Two air raids yesterday afternoon, four last night and three already this morning.

Last night it was almost impossible to sleep with aircraft motors overhead and flak guns and bombs exploding most of the time. The day raids are undoubtedly operations of the tactical air force, since they're quick and short.

Things have been very quiet up to now; the Allies seem to be moving in on every part of Germany except Western Pomerania and the Baltic. At present we are the center of a half-circle of Russian, American and British troops, all eighty to one hundred miles away. No other place in Germany could be farther from the front lines, and it's beginning to seem that ours will be the last camp to be liberated.

We are already the last Air Corps Officer's camp and probably the largest camp of any sort left. Any day for the past two weeks, we have expected a change of some sort, but nothing has happened yet. Rumors, at the rate of four or five full-blown ones each day and a host of "undeveloped" ones, are more wild than ever. We are constantly expecting a Russian or English break-through into this area. German news reports are very sketchy and repetitious when they come in at all. Berlin, say the commentators, will be the last great battle of the war. It certainly will be—where else could they find room to have another one? Except at *Stalag Luft 1*!

The Germans are amazing in their ability and will to still

show resistance at this stage of the war. Their cause is hopeless and yet here we are still sweating it out, and the guards are as cocky as ever. Lately, the road is filled with *Volksturm* units carrying the long *feurstücks*, the homemade grenades that are supposed to stop Russian tanks. They go out on the peninsula to practice throwing these at targets, and the other day one of the poor old boys was blown to Kingdom Come by one of his comrades. How can they keep on fighting? Well, it can't last forever.

The past days have been almost balmy, with a hint of spring; cool, but sunny. Last week my stomach was upset by some horsemeat we had that was a little spoiled, and I spent a couple of miserable days, but I'm O.K. now. Just served what I hope is my last day of K.P. It's certainly fortunate that we got in all those food parcels when we did. This week we are receiving Canadian parcels with real, preserved butter in them, although a very small amount. We make a whipped cream now with *ersatz* margarine, powdered milk and sugar that tastes delicious despite a slight greasiness from that coal-tar oleo.

The airfield just south of Barth has been operational for about two weeks, with Ju-88's taking off on missions every morning and evening. Most of them must have been knocked down or have run out of gas, and only three seem to be flying at present. Some German pilots are rumored to have set down in Sweden for a private surrender.

From the best reports available, those of new Kriegies, after we are liberated we will spend a week or two in England, take a physical exam upon arrival in the States, then have a thirty-day leave at home, plus any convalescent time needed.

In a way, it will be a sad homecoming for me. It's still so very hard to realize that I won't see Bob there, and that all the plans I had of taking him flying, visiting with him in Dayton, seeing him come up the stairs on weekends at home, can't come true. I will miss him even more than I do now, and I dread the thought of having to face the reality of his absence. Still, there's

nothing to be done about it, and I'm sure he doesn't want to be mourned by long faces and tearful regrets.

Another air raid siren blowing now. They have us running into the barracks like jack-rabbits this morning. Another fellow was shot at yesterday by the guards. I wonder if I can ever forget the sound of that damned siren?

Monday, April 30, 1945 Things are happening fast around my little "home away from home" lately. For two



FLAK SCHOOL FROM GUARD TOWER

days, the airfield has been packed with FW 190's, Me 210's and 410's, and Do 217's by the score, landing and taking off all day long, buzzing the camp on their way to bombing missions, and making sleep at night almost impossible.

Today, huge flying boats and transports are flying continually west, carrying women and children from Barth and Stralsund away from the front. We heard that we might be shackled into freighters and moved west too, but I guess Jerry has enough to worry about without bothering with us.

The Russians are within thirty miles of us; we don't know how close. We have been hearing big guns for several days. Heinrich Himmler, the Gestapo chief, is at Zingst, four or five miles north of here on the peninsula. Half of our guards left during the night and we expect the others to run at any moment. These *Volksturm* ancients have no desire to meet the Russkies.



FOXHOLE EXPERTS

Earth-shaking explosions have been going on at the Flak School for three hours, presumably the demolishing of equipment. We can see dense clouds of smoke and flying metal. Everyone's nerves, on edge for so long, are about shot. I know mine are.

For the past two weeks, there has of course been intense interest in the Jerry broadcasts coming through our loudspeaker at the end of the hall. Each night about 9:15, all the men crowd down under the speaker, in the dark, holding Brackendorf up where he can hear and translate. At each pause, eager questions

break out of the sweating mob. Then we hear the announcer start in on "*Bombardieren*," the bombing news that comes last and no longer interests us, and the whole bunch thunders down the hall to the map at the other end, where we hold up matches and lighters to see the latest advances pointed out.

Now we can only wait to see our news first hand because the reports over the loudspeaker are almost devoid of news with the Jerry communications breaking down. Americans are vaguely reported as opening up all along the Elbe, in this direction, but they will have to move fast to beat the Russians here. All day we have been digging slit-trenches and foxholes alongside the barracks, by order of Colonel Zemke. Each room has a big trapdoor cut in the floor, and a deep trench leading out to the other trenches and embankments. In case there is fighting or a mistaken bombing of our camp, we are to hit the dirt and hope like hell.

The explosions are still going on, shaking the barracks down to its foundations. There's really a lot of fervent praying that there won't be any resistance made here. Are we sweating! And would I like a gun!

QUESTION—AND ANSWER

I can't pretend to understand the reason
 Why God has let this massacre occur.
But I don't feel that I am echoing treason
 When in my soul I hear my mind demur.
In the early quiet hours of silent night,
 What beasts we are when sense has taken flight,
When brother hunts for brother, flying high,
 To hurl him to the earth in sudden death;
When battle screams are cries that rend the sky,
 And Heaven itself is stained by blood-quenched breath;
The footstool of His Throne is touched by madness!
 Look! In His eyes there is the saddest sadness.

Oh, King of Love and Peace, forgive my pride;
It was my sword that pierced Thy Holy Side.

Lt. John M. Copping



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Tuesday, May 1, 1945 Well, it's happened; and technically, at least, we are free! Yesterday was full of wild rumors and many bulletins were issued by the Colonel. For a time, it was thought that we would be moved out to Wismar last night, but the Jerries proved unable and also disinclined to fool with us any further. So they pulled out themselves, and American Kriegie M.P.'s are now in the towers and patrolling the fences. The camp is now under full command of Colonel Zemke.

I stayed at the night-latrine window for quite a long time last night, watching the flashes in the southeast. There was a bedlam of noise down by the Jerry quarters until midnight and then it became completely quiet, so that's the time they left and we became free. An Allied ship strafed the airfield with brilliant tracers and we did some quick ducking! The way people spray bullets around here is a menace to public safety.

According to BBC, which we now can get on the German radios, the Russians are nearing Stralsund, 16 miles from here, and are driving over to Rostock, 30 miles southwest of here, cutting off this seacoast area. So unless many front line troops are closed off in this neck of land, our liberation should be without any fighting.

The situation is quite peculiar; we are in command of the

camp while the airfield only two miles away is still under German command and still operational. The day is cold, snowy, and rainy and therefore no flying is going on so far. Ceiling almost zero, and it's very dark. The Mayor of Barth is coming out this morning to discuss cooperation with us as to the sharing of the bakery in town, the meeting of the Russians, etc. Six Germans, including Major Steinauer, the old "morale" officer, are still in camp as administrative and public relations aides, now our prisoners of war under parole. Many of the Jerries in the evacuation said they were going to try to sneak off and come back to surrender to us before they fell into the hands of the Russians. Can't say that I blame them either—they were scared stiff.

The Flak School demolition went on until last night, an interminable barrage of the nerves. It was in flames and is undoubtedly completely gutted by this time.

Yesterday afternoon soldiers and civilian refugees began looting the Red Cross parcel room in the School, eating the food on the spot or hiding parcels in the woods. Half of the soldiers were drunk, discipline finally *kaput*. Colonel Zemke took a big detachment of our men over to guard the room and to bring the parcels into the camp proper. The looters took about 7,000 of them. Due to the last-minute solicitude of the Germans, we still have several months' supply left, a week's supply of bread and over a month of potatoes, so we're sitting pretty in regard to food.

As the men of this detachment were returning from the Flak School, the camp ammunition dump was blown up by a delayed time fuse, one final, tender attention by our German buddies. Although they were two or three hundred yards away at the time, all the men were knocked flat by the blast. The explosion seemed to lift our barracks right up in the air, shattering or blowing open all the windows, and scaring hell out of ten thousand Kriegies.

The happenings of last night were as eerie as anything I have

ever experienced. It was pitch black, all the lights were out; the guards in the machine gun towers were calling back and forth to one another, the Bosssdogs barking, horses galloping; humming and clanking noises at the airfield offered no logical explanation, the Flak School regularly erupted into sound; and a heavy, blanketing mist gave all those sounds a muffled quality of unreality and mysterious anonymity. Several flare signals shot up from the school, ending with a "red-red," and within fifteen minutes all the night-born noises retreated and died away to nothing. Then it was deathly still and, far away, we could hear the guns on the front lines firing in monotonous anger. The spell was violently broken by a sudden single-plane attack on the airfield and then that queer curtain of silence dropped again.

At 1:05 A.M., our guards went out and took over the towers. To date life is no different, and the old camp routine is being maintained. But the Russians should be here today or tomorrow and we expect to be flown out to real freedom soon after their arrival. Freedom? It doesn't sound real!

May 1; 11:00 A.M. Rumor, stemming from a statement by the Russian Kriegies here, places the Russian spearhead only three kilometers from Barth; we don't hear anything as yet, so perhaps that's too optimistic.

A broadcast from Berlin this morning gave orders that the Allied warning be observed and that mistreatment or execution of POW's would come right back on the camp personnel; camps are to be left intact for liberation. All of which is most reassuring, and I wish we had heard it a few days ago when we were sweating out the possibility of having to move west.

The *burgomeister* of Barth just went back to town after his conference with our officers, a very worried-looking German.

Major Pritchard took a reconnaissance party toward the Russian lines this morning, but we have had no reports from them as yet.

All business has ceased in Barth and the people there are

waiting in their homes for the Russian occupation. There will be no resistance from them!

May 1; 6:00 P.M. The hell with it! All day we have been impatiently looking for our liberators, but no show. Everyone is worn out, physically and mentally. The camp is like a graveyard, the men lying in bed or silently loafing around, staring into space. The tension is getting too great for rumors to be tolerated, so they are dying down.



"THEY ALSO SERVE . . ."

Major von Mühler came in and wanted to surrender under our protection, but the Colonel refused and sent him off again. With a record like his, he can take his own chances.

No activity at all except for unexplained explosions.

Wednesday, May 2, 1945 After we were worn out with waiting and had given up the Russians, they came! We were listening to, wonder of wonders, a London re-broadcast of the "Hit Parade" on a Barth loudspeaker. Earlier British news-commentators had reported the capture of Stral-

sund. Suddenly a man rushed in from outside, shouting in unintelligible excitement and a stampede started for the door. I slipped quickly into an angle of the door frame and escaped the surging mob, but several men were almost trampled under foot.

The tower M.P. called down the news that he had just received a telephone call from South Compound and that a Russian recon patrol was in the camp, conferring with Colonel Zemke! We all ran to the fence, shouting and cheering, but of course could see nothing.

Later, Amundsen came in with the news that there were eight of the Russians and that they had already moved on. Then a special news bulletin came in over the radio saying that Hamburg radio had announced Hitler's death and the decision of Admiral Doenitz, the new Reich head, to "fight on." He must be nuts.

A little later still, Brackendorf called us into the hall, where he stood on my complaining bed to make the official announcement that there were two Russian soldiers, old veterans armed with Tommy guns, in a commandeered German truck driven by a French worker, with two South Africans who had escaped from a concentration camp, just leaving camp! Really an international affair. They talked with the Colonel, had some schnapps with him, and left after telling him that the main tank forces were about five hours away, most of them roaring drunk, and that they should be here this morning.

We started grinding crackers for pie and cake at one o'clock in the morning; long ago we decided that when we were liberated we'd make a glorious attempt to eat everything in sight—Marple baked half the night. I was completely exhausted and dropped on top of my bed without taking off my shoes and slept until this morning.

Today, every Compound but ours is more outside the fences than in, trading and scrounging souvenirs. Barth has been looted by drunken Germans and slave laborers and the people are in

a pitiable state of fear and want. Amundsen chased about 5,000 refugees out of the ruins of the Flak School, where he is obtaining emergency power from the remaining generator. Lights and radio were on until twelve last night, but the water pressure is down to a mere trickle.

Four Russians are in the *Vorlager* this morning and we probably won't see many more, as the main forces will by-pass us to the south. There's nothing north of us to occupy! Today we are having our Victory Dinner. The happy day has come—now for home!



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Saturday, May 5, 1945 Things have been happening so fast and so furiously that I have forgotten all about my diary. The only word to describe the last three days is "chaotic!" Now a little order is appearing, and it's about time!

The Russians arrived in force all day Wednesday, flooding over the countryside. Their commanding colonel came in and said we would have to move out on foot to march to the Elbe. When he left, another colonel appeared outside North Two and began raising the Russian variety of hell because we were still behind barbed wire. He began giving orders right and left, while casually pointing his pistol at Colonel Zemke.

We were ordered to rip down all the fences immediately, and did so when the pistol waved toward us. Nearly everyone swarmed out to the road, running down to Barth, looting the Flak School of piles of German equipment, and searching farms, stores and houses for liquor, women and souvenirs. Me? I was eating, as usual, and doing K.P. for the next meal. But by the time it was ready, no one cared about eating. They gulped down a little and started throwing their bowls and cups out through the closed window! The whole place was seized with hysteria and the orders that came to us all afternoon, conflicting with and contradicting each other, only added to the confusion.

TH' CAPTAIN UV TH' BOAT
WOT TAKES US 'OME!

Though I've never been no scholar,
Wiv no luv'ly stiff white collar,
I've made me mind up—'ere I go—
A po-um. Sum'll like it, others 'ate it;
But I'm gonna dedicate it
Ter th' captain uv th' boat wot takes us 'ome!

Now, I've dreamt about this bloke,
Like yer often dreams of folk,
Perfect strangers—yet yer feels yer know 'em;
And th' moment that I eyes 'im,
Then I bet I'll recognize 'im—
As th' captain uv th' boat wot takes us 'ome!

Per'aps 'e's 'andsome, like an actor;
Per'aps 'is dial would stop a tractor;
Per'aps 'e 'asn't got an 'air upon 'is dome!
But th' moment that I meet 'im,
Then 'ow I'm gonna greet 'im—
Th' captain uv th' boat wot takes us 'ome!

'E may be gay and full of cheer;
'E may say, "Sonny, now you're 'ere,
Let's cruise around—where would yer like to roam?"
If 'e does, I'll tell 'im straight—
"Yer th' captain, yer me mate,
Don't mess abart—this ship's to take me 'ome!"

I'll obey 'is slightest wishes,
Scrub 'is decks an' wash 'is dishes
As long as 'e steers straight across th' foam.
And at last, w'en we sights shore,
Then I'll shake the bloomin' por
Uv th' captain uv the' boat wot takes us 'ome!

Pte. John N. Burke
British P.O.W.

Finally, the Russian commander said that we must clear out and march to Rostock at 6:00 P.M., either to entrain for Odessa or to meet our own lines. At that, many men made up their packs and left in pairs or threes to walk to our lines by themselves. Twelve left our room of twenty, but all except five came back. The others are gone, either now in England, still roaming over Germany, or accidentally shot by the Russians. We are repeatedly warned by both Russian and American commanders that the Russkie soldiers shoot anyone they see who isn't one of them; and they sometimes don't even make that distinction when inebriated.

All these front-line Russians were terror troops, raging drunk, blood mad and trigger-happy. For three days in Barth, Zingst and the countryside, they have been pillaging, raping and butchering, machine-gunning everything in sight. Ten or fifteen POW's are said to have been shot by mistake already.

That first night we were free of the fences, hundreds were in town, drinking and plundering. Since then we have been kept on the peninsula, although hundreds more have been sneaking off on local forays or to head for the American lines. Resistance has ceased in Northern Germany, so these adventurers may make it all right; but the Russians shoot first and couldn't ask questions anyway! They are very friendly and demonstrative when they know you for an American, but when drunk they fire at everything and anybody and sometimes shoot into the air for lack of a better target. Machine gun and rifle fire sound almost continuously over the area. I am meekly incurious about investigating the origin.

When our liberators first came, an American flag was hoisted to the Nazi flagpole, flanked by Russian and English flags. That was quickly changed—now a Russian flag occupies the center position, raised above the others.

Well, the second colonel moved on, and then the commanding general assigned to this area arrived with his staff. We didn't walk out as threatened, and the general gave us ten days

for the Allies to come in and fly us out. Parties have been sent to Sweden, Rostock and Wismar to make contact with our Army and inform them of the situation. After the general took over, "sober" occupation troops came in and set up martial law, with a 9:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. curfew in Barth.

They started clearing the airfield of mines and it is now supposed to be ready for use. An American major is flying one



GEN. BORISOFF'S RECEPTION

useable Ju-88 out tomorrow to clear up any final hitches relating to our evacuation. In the meantime, we are eating enormously at last and roaming around the peninsula.

A Colonel Moss arrived yesterday to speak to General Arisoff, the Russian commander, about getting us out. There is a possibility that General Montgomery may be here tomorrow. Major General Sakovich and General Borisoff, the "Hero of Stalingrad" and leader of the break-through at Stettin, were in camp today, and we tactfully staged a big demonstration of enthusiasm after hearing a speech delivered in eloquent Russian.

This afternoon an American major, sergeant, and p.f.c. came in a jeep from the U. S. lines near Rostock to see that we were all right. The major was looking for his Kriegie brother, but didn't find him because he was one of those who skipped out. Thousands of men rushed down to the South Compound and we cheered the beaming, chubby sergeant and his jeep until we were hoarse! They are from the Ninth Army and have gone back to their HQ to report.

It is rumored that General Montgomery is coming to inspect this camp and the several concentration camps found near here. At the airfield, at Zingst, and just southwest of here were French and Polish camps, full of starving, mutilated prisoners. Twenty-five Frenchmen were found chained in a pit, still alive, but all hopelessly dying. Those seen in town were like mummified skeletons, too far gone in misery to have any interest in their surroundings. The whole situation is one brutal mess and I'll be so very thankful to leave Germany behind me.

The Germans are really paying now for the cruelties they have inflicted on others, however, and I can't help feeling pity for them. All day and all night, they are around this camp like a flock of frightened sheep, begging admittance or trying to steal in for protection. At night, they creep out from town and sleep in the fields near us. The Russians leave our camp proper strictly to itself, but they have not forgotten the seige of Stalingrad and they are rough on Germans. Hundreds of Jerries have been shot or have committed suicide in this small area, some out on our peninsula. Three women shot themselves about a hundred yards from my barracks and we sent out a detail to bury them. The Mayor of Barth killed himself on Wednesday. Rape cases from six to sixty are brought in to our doctors by the Jerries, I have heard.

Now the wheels have started turning to hasten the routine of our departure. It is said that Lancasters, C-47's, every type of ship is being collected to take us out, and they may come any day now. The Russians took many pictures and full particulars

of camp life for publication tomorrow in their newspapers, so full news of us should be home soon to relieve our families' minds. And at last ours are somewhat eased. For the last three days we haven't known what would happen and most of the wilder spirits have gone away on their own by now. I feel that I can gain more and get out faster by waiting here. And so we are still sweating it out in the same old spot.

Monday, May 7, 1945 Events are slowing their rapid pace now. Colonel Zemke promised all those who left for our lines without permission a dishonorable discharge, General Eisenhower has issued orders to stay put, those who couldn't be restrained have left, and the Russians are rounding up all loose Kriegies.

Yesterday I wandered along the shore line all day and caught about thirty fish with the Jerry nets, so we had a big fish fry. The Russians drove in a herd of cattle confiscated from the ruined German farmers, and Kriegie butchers distributed the meat. The steak I had was tough, but oh, so delicious!

Last night the orders from General Eisenhower were read. We are to stay in camp, we'll have plenty of food and will have first priority on airplanes as they become available.

This morning, Parke Wright, Joe Tryens and I dug out a large German tent and set it up in the woods by the water. We were going to move in, but the Russians put on a big show for the camp this afternoon so we went to that instead.

It was an excellent performance by the Russkie equivalent of our USO. There was a male chorus of 25 voices, a Russian band comprised of three mandolins, three accordions, a trumpet, clarinet, bass fiddle and drum, and a dancing troupe of eight men and three girls, all good dancers. The program was announced by a Petrograd Master of Ceremonies and translated by one from Brooklyn. The Russian was very dramatic and fluent, his hair flying off his shoulders and his arms waving at every word. Nearly all of the songs were war songs, of heroes, glory and the girl everyone left behind. From the looks of the Russian

Army, they didn't leave any behind! One was a hymn to Stalin, the "Teacher and Leader." Several were "funny" songs, amusing even though we couldn't understand the words.

The program was opened with several numbers from the Regimental Band, whose members had trouble in sitting down with their instruments, pistols, rifles and burp guns getting in the way! It was evidently a matter of personal dignity not to lay their weapons aside when playing. One hard-bitten character played the piccolo while his rifle rested in the crook of his arm!

Tuesday, May 8, 1945 VE Day, but passing uneventfully here. I spent the day working on a suntan and in waiting out the shower line. With patience, I can shower every day now. Since February, we have been getting a shower only once every two weeks, so it's a luxury not to be ignored.

We have filled in our slit-trenches—*nichts mehr terror-flieger* over Germany.

Of course, all are disheartened at the idea of spending Victory Day in the same old barbed wire palace. A major who drove up from our lines at Schwerin today says,

"A matter of days before you leave."

They all say that, as the weeks pass by. I know that our planes are doing important jobs and I suppose we should be patiently waiting our turn, but *ach, du Lieber*, it seems so long! The major took letters back to mail for us and I sent one home. We may leave tomorrow or be here for weeks, so I'm playing safe.

The Russians were shocked to find that we are not publicly mourning the death of President Roosevelt. They have issued pre-emptory orders that each man must wear a black armband and black material has therefore acquired a sudden value. Anyone not wearing a mourning band is looking for trouble.

Many of the men have painted American flags and the word "Amerikanski" on their clothing to remove the ready doubt that Russians assume in the interests of target practice. These

quick-on-the-trigger Allies of ours are a pain in the neck.

Most of them are pure Mongolian types, brutish and ignorant. Very few are able to read or write, and they are wide-eyed at the sight of wrist watches, modern plumbing and electric lights. If they see a leather jacket or wrist-watch, it immediately becomes theirs at the point of a pistol, accompanied by a guileless smile.



AMERICAN HEADQUARTERS

Speaking of plumbing, ours is now the most primitive possible. No one will consider cleaning out the latrine any more, and the adjacent farming fields have taken over its functions.

Wednesday, May 9, 1945 Last night, three of us slept in our tent in the woods, but the change from that old familiar hallway was too much for me and I am moving back in. I lay awake for hours out there. It doesn't seem natural not to have my head bouncing up and down as the fellows walk past my bunk during the night. I have reached the point where

I can nearly always tell who is going past by the way he walks, and I often surprise someone by calling his name in the dark.

Our evenings are like a trip through Dante's *Inferno*. Some of these lame-brains found a lot of German rocket flares and smoke bombs and they amuse themselves after dark each night by sending up a barrage. As if we hadn't had enough explosions and excitement, these damned things are constantly banging and whizzing, throwing an eerie glare over the entire sky. Some of them are "whistlers," and, as they trail down, they make an awful screaming noise that gives me the willies. I'll be glad when they have exhausted the supply and these home-made air raids are over.

The other day searchers found a whole roomful of letters we have written since December, so they haven't gone anywhere, and I guess that the folks have had, at the most, only two or three letters from me. I didn't really expect that they would go out, nevertheless, always wrote my quota, and it makes me mad to think that they went no farther than the mail room right here in camp. There must be a great deal of mail for me scattered all along the route from here to America, but of course I have seen the only letter that I shall receive here.

Resentful Kriegies have burned down most of the guard towers and during the last two days, crews have been tearing down the fences, rolling up the wire and removing the posts. Why, I don't know. Yesterday I ripped a gash in my head on a loose strand of wire, and now I look like a tonsured monk. Scotty, the medical corpsman in our Compound, took an unholy delight in shaving the spot.

The colonel says that this place will probably be used as a refugee camp for displaced slave laborers until they can be sent back to their homes, and we are to leave all our supplies for their use. Everyone is a little reluctant to do so, fearing that the Germans may get them.

I don't care—most of my resentment has been lost in a burning desire to get away from here and back to the sane and pros-

perous land from whence I came. I am worried about myself; probably it is just the reaction to all the excitement we have had, but I get frequent dizzy spells, my heart seems to pound at an alarming rate, and I am filled with a vague, threatening fear of everything and everybody. My imagination has gone out of control and I wildly think I am going to be killed, that I am going crazy. I suppose I have just talked myself into this state and I'm trying now to talk myself out of it.

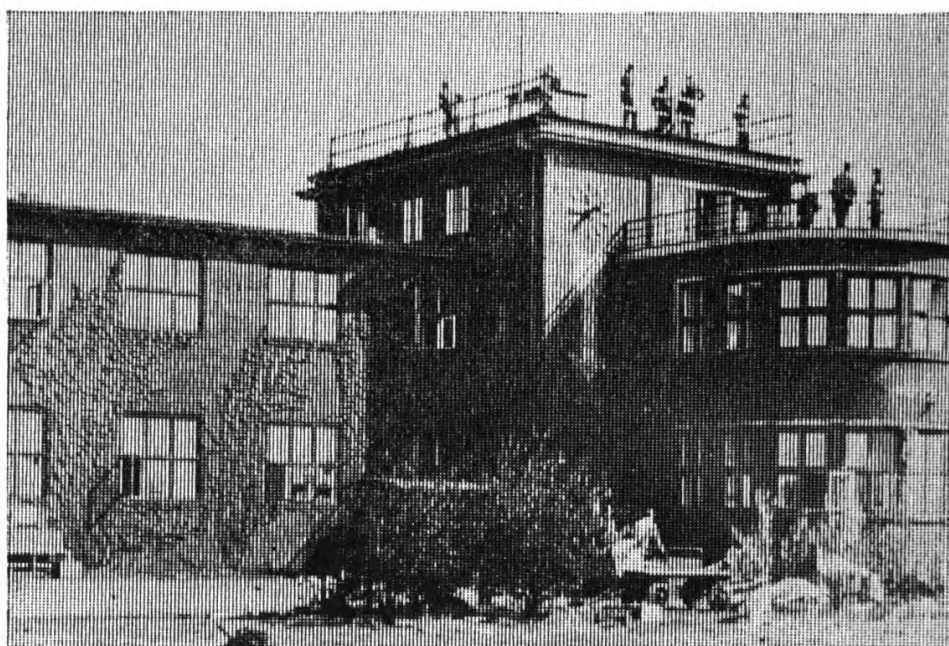
Saturday, May 12, 1945 Finally we got the word that we may leave tomorrow. There have been hundreds of rumors throughout the week, but we are still sitting. Everyone is under great tension, and life is more and more mentally hectic every day. I felt yesterday as if I were going "around the bend," but finally quieted down. Sudden spells of internal shivering and unreasonable apprehension often shake me severely before I can throw them off, but it's nothing you can tell anyone about. My gosh, it would be absurd for me to crack now.

We have cleared out a Jerry barracks near our Compound and created an Officer's Club with chairs and tables and pictures from the Flak School. There's a piano, and the orchestra plays frequently. I am singing with the quintet, and we entertained around camp last night. The club had a barbecue, small but good, serving up cattle presented by the Russians. Five inebriated Russian tank officers were there during the evening with Colonel Gabreski, dancing for us and then staring open-mouthed at a jitterbugging exhibition.

Five of us swiped a rowboat late this afternoon and rowed over to the fish wharf to watch the Russkies order the Germans around. The former are certainly a childish, impulsive lot, but the menace behind their ingeniousness is apparent in the carefully submissive attitude of the Jerry fishermen.

Several beautiful B-17's landed with evacuation personnel late this afternoon and took some of the Limeys back with them on the return trip, so we'll probably go tomorrow. *Mañana* of *mañanas*!

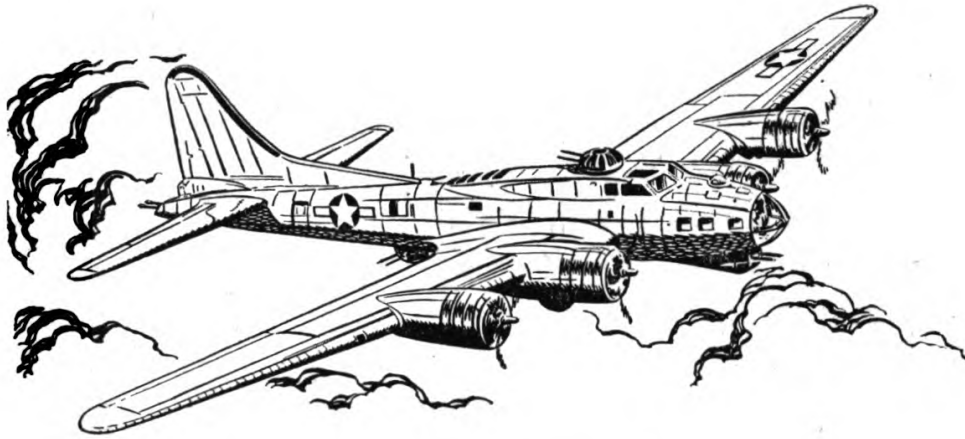
A few days ago we had a walking tour for our block, through Barth, past the French concentration camp, and over to the airfield. We spent a couple of hours there looking over the airplanes and hangers. Most of the store windows in Barth were smashed, there were Russian guards everywhere, and red flags hung from every German window. The Germans and Kriegies stared curiously at each other, both feeling the unusual sensa-



AIRFIELD OPERATIONS BUILDING

tion of our reversed positions. There was no spitting on us during this trip through Barth, nor any pantomime of slitting throats.

One man stepped out of our group while passing a farmhouse, snatched up a squawking chicken and wrung its neck while the owner passively looked on in grim helplessness. The children we passed sidled along with their eyes carefully held on the ground. They probably still believe those stories that have been taught to them about the "brutal" *Amerikanisch*, poor kids.



CHAPTER TWENTY

Saturday, May 19, 1945 Now I am in Camp Lucky Strike, on the Normandy coast of France, waiting for a ship to take me home. We are in a huge tent city of sixty to seventy thousand RAMPS: Recovered Allied Military Personnel. The authorities in charge officially expect to have us out of here within ten days, but shipping may not be provided so quickly. Next week sometime, we shall receive new uniforms, complete with insignia, ribbons and all, in which to go home.

To return to Sunday morning, May 13th, we marched over to the airfield by blocks, taking our last look at *Stalag Luft 1* and Barth. It was a queer sensation to be leaving so casually those fences we had yearningly stared over month after month. While going through Barth, we marched in formation, singing the old cadet songs, just as the Jerry guards used to march past us bawling their Nazi "fight songs." That was undoubtedly the only time those narrow streets have echoed to the strains of "I've Got Sixpence."

At the field, thousands of excited men swarmed along the hanger line. B-17's were landing and taking off at the rate of twenty every half hour and we were loaded thirty men to a ship. As the next group of ships landed, the men assigned to

“LEST WE FORGET . . .”

. . . The hours spent in forced content,
The long-awaited Big Event,
The written letter that ne’er appeared
With news that folks at home had heard.

. . . The sandy soil so easily blown,
The barbed wire fence not easily flown,
The sports field and the trodden path,
The weekly showers and bucket-bath.

. . . The baseball games and passing girls,
The long-haired men with feminine curls,
The huge moustache and shaven head,
The solid board and straw-filled bed.

. . . The shuttered windows, four-year “lurch,”
The tunnel-diggers, with mud besmirched,
The Klim-can pans and makeshift lamp,
The fireless stoves when days were damp.

. . . The Red Cross clothes and self-made fashions,
“Search party up” and hurried stashin’s,
The turnip, cabbage, and lowly spud,
Always wet and covered with mud.

. . The margarine, jam, and cheese, and fish,
Which made a rough, untempting dish.
The weighty bread we had to toast,
The D-ration chocolate loved by most.

. . The long-sought toothbrush and awful paste
That rivalled the Jerry food in taste.
That modern play, and concert too,
Plaques, art-works, and barley-glue.

. . The *postern* towers and bright spotlights
That searched the camp throughout the nights,
The siren's wail, and droning planes,
The flying boats and whistling trains.

. . And, last but not least in the G.T.O.,
Our Kriegie friends, each G.I. Joe!

Unknown P.O.W.

them were let through the gate and deployed along the taxi-strip, to board with the engines still running.

I rode in the radio room and had a good view of the camp and the surrounding Baltic Sea as we took off. Several men were sick, and I myself was nervous and apprehensive all through the trip. My memories of B-17's are not so pleasant and I expected this one to burst into flame at any time, just as *Fearless Fosdick* and *Pakawallup II* had done! My fears, happily, were unrealized and we had a smooth journey all the way.

The trip over Germany and France was just as depressing as is seeing Europe on the ground. Bombed-out areas and shell craters are everywhere, nothing but devastation and destruction, the foolish evidence of man's stubborn conflict.

After a three-hour trip, we arrived at a field and made our approach; and just as I was breathing a sigh of relief to be leaving the sky, we were informed by radio that it was the wrong place, and the throttles went forward again. Another of my absurd convictions that something was going to happen, that the trip was ill-fated, seized me. I can't seem to shake off this dread of some unknown disaster.

We landed at an airfield near Laon, France, a big base for A-26's, the first ones any of us have seen. As soon as we climbed out, our ships took off for England and we sat by the runways for a couple of hours, waiting for trucks. Red Cross girls fed us doughnuts and lemonade, (exotic provender!), cigars were passed around and magazines distributed, all things we hadn't seen for a long, long time. I don't know who stared the most, the girls and soldiers at us, or we at them! It all seemed too good to be true, and still does.

The trucks, long trailer-types, arrived and we packed into them, laden with doughnuts, for the four-hour trip through Rheims to a large, sprawling infantry camp where we were fed and bedded down in tents. Monday morning we all registered, had a delicious lunch—oh, this Army chow is wonderful!—

and left in trucks, going back to Rheims. We disembarked at the railroad station and were put aboard a hospital train there.

Squads of German prisoners were scrubbing the station floor in Rheims. In fact, the camp where we spent the night was using them for details, and a sad-looking lot they were. They were in marked contrast to the cocky, overbearing Jerries we knew.

The train didn't move out until evening, so we had a long wait. General Eisenhower, whose headquarters we saw while driving through town, had his special train there next to ours, a beautiful equipage. In Rheims we also drove past the famous cathedral and several gorgeous WAC's! Visible across the tracks from our car was the schoolhouse in which the formal surrender was signed, the building profusely draped with flags.

Our train pulled out last of the three loaded with POW's, and we went to bed in our triple-decked stretchers. The car had no windows and so I didn't see much of France on the journey. The truck rides were interesting for that reason.

The French women are as beautiful as tradition always claims they are, except for the homely ones, and the country is the loveliest I have yet seen in Europe. But the towns and cities are almost as badly demolished as those in Germany. Whole blocks of houses are reduced to rubble or standing empty with walls and roofs torn away. There will be nothing but starvation and poverty for these people for years to come.

Why, in the short two weeks that we were with the Russians, they had already stripped the Germans around us of all their valuable goods, livestock and poultry, and I can readily understand why so many of the Germans were committing suicide. The affair seems increasingly senseless, brutal and stupid—how can any man, Russian, German, or anything else, find any satisfaction in forcing misery on another? As for America, it will seem like Heaven.

The thought of soon being in that untouched, peaceful, tolerant land is the only thing that keeps me from going nuts. Life

has no meaning for all these millions, and the weight of their hopeless misery seems to be settling down on my shoulders. Nowhere is there compassion or friendship; the only evident feelings are those of fierce hatred or brutal triumph. I can't remember ever having been so morose and despondent, especially at a time when I expected to be living in the clouds.

We arrived here at Lucky Strike at noon Tuesday, were given a shower, delousing, and new clothes—fatigue uniforms and underwear. Those worn clothes that have seen me through eight months of prison were unfeelingly burned.

I am in a tent with six others and have a cot and sleeping bag. It is very luxurious after that wood-shaving mattress and the wooden slats that the Germans provided. The food is still wonderfully novel, despite the fact that we are on a "stomach-reconditioning" diet, all soft foods and no seasoning. It's a little late for dieting; the mess officer should have seen us eating those last two weeks in Germany!

Most of each day is spent standing in lines, from a quarter of a mile on up in length, for mess, egg-nogs, movies and USO shows. There are four "areas" in camp, each fairly well equipped with facilities.

More and more, I am realizing what a hot spot we were in and how lucky we are to be alive. Before leaving Barth, men looking through the German Intelligence files found orders sent by Hitler to execute us all in reprisal for a heavy raid on Breslau, dated a week or two before the Germans left. These orders had been vetoed by Himmler, who was then at Zingst. Also found were letters of commendation, praising the guards who had shot prisoners during our confinement.

Then there is an article in the *Stars and Stripes* today which says that orders were twice sent out by the German High Command to execute all POW's, but that the *Wehrmacht* blocked the move each time.

There's also an article about our old Compound commander Colonel Spicer, and his death sentence for the talk he gave us

about the "dirty bastards" last November. I didn't write much about it in camp because the Jerries were picking up all the information they could on searches to add to his trial. He certainly said a lot more than the *Stars and Stripes* gave him credit for. Choice quotation was, "I'd rather stay here and rot for ten years if they can kill every ——— German while I'm doing it, lads!"

He was issuing warnings and orders to us not to be familiar with or trust any of the this-and-that so-and-so's. What a vocabulary Spicer had! Anyway, both he and we are out of their hands now and I imagine he's thanking God just as fervently as I am, although he was no weak sister and didn't seem to care what they did to him. My nerves are still shot; I jump and quiver at any sudden sound and I am still haunted by an undefined fear, a feeling of impending disaster. Perhaps I've been worried and scared for so long that it has become a habit. Now that there's nothing to worry about, I try to create one! Doing a good job, too.

Monday, May 21, 1945 Good and bad. Yesterday I was standing in front of the shower tent waiting for my turn and out came Herb Corwin! We were so glad to see one another that we could scarcely make sensible conversation. He has been here for two weeks and expects to leave soon. The ankle he broke when we bailed out has healed perfectly, after giving him trouble for several months. He was moved all around the country after leaving the Jerry hospital and has never been in a permanent camp for long, although he was at *Stalag Luft 3*, in Sagen, for awhile. I told him how to find Henry in Area A, and he is going over there to visit before leaving for home. Poor Henry still hasn't had news of his wife and baby—he has been pacing that maternity ward for months now!

Today I ran into Pete Keryan, who told me that Max and Djmal are both all right, and that Max's wrist has healed satisfactorily. So it appears that our whole crew has come back intact, an unusual record for a Kriegie crew. Tom has already

shipped for the States; I happened to see him for a few minutes just as his shipment was leaving.

Unfortunately, while I was having my shower, the C.O. of my bombardment group landed on the airstrip here and went around looking up 401st men to take back to England. He had two B-17's with him and hopes to take the men to America when the group flies home. I walked over to Area "A" just in time to see the ships with that familiar "Triangle-S" insignia taking off. It looks as if I have really missed the boat unless he comes back, as he said he might.

A ten-day leave in England has been offered to a limited number of RAMPS, followed by transportation home from there. I turned the idea down, thinking I could leave faster from here, so now I will just have to wait until we go to Le Havre.

Several of us are going into the nearest town, St. Valery-en-Caux, to look around and visit the local dives. We are expecting to move to Area "D" soon, where all men are processed and issued clothing. It is the center of the camp, and has all the Red Cross tents, movies, P.X., eggnog, etc.

I walked into the writing tent the other day and found Marjorie Main, a Red Cross girl whom I had known at Ohio Wesleyan. We had a long talk about college days and she told me the news of the people I used to know there. It was a great thrill, running into someone whom I had known before going into the Army, but I discovered that I was very shy and uncertain in talking to her, just as predicted by that psychological article sent to prison camp by someone's wife.

Tuesday, May 22, 1945 I had an interesting time in St. Valery. We were wandering around from house to house, trying to trade cigarettes for eggs; we still haven't any money and I haven't had a fresh egg since I left England last September. An old beldame who runs a cafe on the main street invited us in for some free cognac, and we sat around sampling the cognac and singing for a long time.

Some M.P.'s came in to break up our little party, but when

they found out that we had been prisoners of war, they sat down for a drink with us before continuing their rounds. Later on, we hitch-hiked an Army truck ride back to camp. It is so easy to get rides when the roads are filled with GI vehicles all day long that I am going to take off and see a little of the country.

This camp has almost 90,000 POW's in it now, and the transportation facilities are so far behind that we won't get out for weeks. I am trying to finagle a pass to Paris, but nobody seems to care, or at least can't check up on you, if you go AWOL. It occurs to me that I have never been AWOL since I joined Uncle Sam, and now seems a good time to start on the downward path. *Allons, mes amis!*

I find that my college French, which I thought had completely deserted me, is coming in handily now. Words which I can't even remember when I'm trying to, come to me naturally as I attempt to carry on a conversation, and most of the Frenchmen I meet can understand my pidgin mixture of French, English, German and a little Spanish. I can nearly always find the word I want in one of those languages. I have discovered, however, that they don't like to have you ask them if they speak German. The old lady who set up the drinks for us in St. Valery told me long, involved stories of the German occupation. She herself had a little "of the Engliz," so we could talk together fairly well.

May 29, 1945 Life has become more varied since I decided to ignore the technical ruling that we can't leave camp and have set out on my own to see a little of France. Actually, it is merely a matter of walking out of camp by the proper road, thereby avoiding the M.P.'s. Most of them are just back from combat, and as soon as they find that you were a prisoner of war, they don't ask for a pass, but take you instead to the M.P. bivouac for a meal and a bed, if you happen to be in need of either.

I have been to Le Havre, Cany, St. Valery again, Beauvais,

and Rouen. Rouen is the largest city within my present radius of action, and I have been there twice, hitching rides on the GI trucks which roll by here day and night.

In a sidewalk cafe, on my first visit there, I met two sergeants who are stationed on a tugboat working the Seine River. They tie up each night at Rouen, and so invited me down to their boat when the cafe closed at eleven o'clock, as all public places now must do. We went to the tug and had a huge meal of steaks which the Limeys had traded them for chickens. On this one little tugboat, with six or seven men aboard, they had two hundred pounds of steak, so I felt no hesitation in eating three of them! The fellow from Lucky Strike who was with me was sick on the mixture of wine and steak, but I and my impervious stomach experienced only the great glow of satisfaction which comes from eating three tender, juicy steaks. I think he has stomach trouble anyway. He was held at Barth for a year and a half and, as welcome as the Red Cross food was, it was merely a stop-gap to keep us going until fresh foods and vegetables were available once more. Many of the men are bothered by stomach trouble and ulcers.

After we had eaten our fill and had lounged around for a few hours talking about the States, (they were bringing me up to date on all the shows, music and general news I have been missing), I was shown to a lovely, soft, bouncy bunk in a little stateroom and bid a hearty goodnight by my generous hosts. Naturally enough, I spent an hour or so getting used to that soft, yielding bed so that I could go to sleep, but it was a pleasant endeavor.

The next day, I went back to camp to see if anything had happened. I am afraid it is going to be some time before they come around to the section I am in. Men are going out very slowly and we are near the bottom of the list.

General Eisenhower was here on an inspection of the situation recently and made a speech to several thousand of us, saying that everything was being done to take us home as quickly

as possible, but that transportation is tied up because of the necessity of expediting the war in the Pacific. He is a very magnetic and personable speaker and left us with an impression of complete confidence in his competency. No wonder he is General of the Armies.

He went through the ranks speaking to some of the men and listening to what they had to say. Then, contrary to the usual custom which involves the sage nodding of heads and promises that *something* will be done, whenever Eisenhower heard a grievance aired, he called the colonel in command to his side, had him write down the complaint, and ordered him to right the matter at once.

But since nothing so far as we are personally concerned can be done here in the near future, I went back for another evening with my generous and well-provisioned GI friends in Rouen.

We have been processed and issued our new uniforms and I'm still working on a pass to Paris. I hear that finding places to eat and sleep there is difficult without a pass, so maybe I should make it a trip under legitimate auspices for a change.

CO-PILOT'S LAMENT

Very free verse!

We don't have the brains of a navigator
Or the skill of the bombardier,
We're not aerial gunners,
Or first pilot wonders,
But this I want you to hear—

Who locates the course when you're lost at sea,
Who lowers the bombing C.E.?
Who takes on the stick
When the going gets thick?
I don't want to brag—you tell me.

We don't shine our wings
So you can't see the things,
We don't climb the ranks
Or get any thanks,

But co-pilots also fly!

A Co-pilot



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

June 7, 1945 "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm . . .?" After much finagling and conniving, at long last I have seen Paree.

The pass list to Paris ran into thousands, but I found out that if you have a ride promised, you can have a pass without being next in line on the list. So I persuaded a sergeant at one of the motor pools to write an ambiguous note stating that "transportation facilities at this pool are sufficient" to take me to Paris. On the strength of this note, I managed to talk the understaffed and overly-busy orderly room into issuing a four-day pass to Paris.

As soon as I had that important slip of paper, I hit the road and caught a ride on a refrigerator truck taking chickens to the capitol. We rode all night and I got in just after dawn, signing up at Red Cross headquarters for billets and mess. All living arrangements for men on leave are handled by the Red Cross and the hotels are under their management.

I had a third-floor room in *l'Hotel du Globe*, on the *Rue des Petits Champs*, a block away from the *Theatre Francais* and *Le Louvre*. It is a small second-rate hotel and doesn't serve meals, so I ate in the Officers' Mess at the Red Cross Lafayette Club, once Delmonico's Restaurant, on *l'Avenue de l'Opera*. My room was a funny, lop-sided affair, with one small window that looked

out upon a courtyard full of noisy, early-rising children. The French do not believe in fresh air or in sleeping late. I do.

My *concierger* was a rotund old Frenchman with a gray walrus mustache, looking just as I have been led to believe he would look by all the novels I've ever read about Paris. My French was as incomprehensible to him as was his English to me, so we had very little to do with each other.

My first act after settling down in my room—I mustn't forget to mention the wallpaper in that room, though; it was a grayish-greenish-purplish color with red flecks, a sure inspiration for nightmares, and looked like no other wallpaper in the world—my first act was to unpack my bag and go downstairs to ask where I might take a bath. With many proud gestures, the old boy led me to a door opening off the main lobby and with a loud "*Voilà*" presented to my startled eyes a huge tub. He assured me that the water was "*tres chaud*" so I forgot the improprieties of taking a bath in the lobby and closed the door. The water was very far from *chaud*, in fact it was cold as ice, and I resolved not to bathe in Paris again. I later found an Army shower room with *tres chaud* water and my problem was solved.

The four days were spent, naturally, in seeing Paris and I had a wonderful time. Went on a tour of the city to the *Arc de Triomphe*, *Place de la Concorde*, *Hotel des Invalides*, *Notre Dame*, the *Eiffel Tower*, *Montmartre*, the *Tuileries*, *Palais Royale*, and many other places. The evenings I spent with several of my friends, going to dances and the various dives which make themselves apparent after the sun goes down, mostly up around *Pigalle*, called Pig-Alley by the Americans.

On my last evening, another pilot and I found a little cafe where the company was congenial and the champagne good, and toward the end of the evening, I became a Parisian entertainer. An accordionist was playing American songs, using sheet music written in French. I knew the melodies and could sight-

read the French, so I sang for an hour or two, collecting several francs from the uncritical customers!

The food in my restaurant, served by French employees of the Red Cross, was excellent and the only inexpensive thing in Paris. We had waiters, white tablecloths, a small orchestra playing during meal times, and it was a far cry from chow-call in Barth, where you had to be a strong man to keep your feet in the rush.

Although, according to the Army, we are paid at the rate of two cents to a franc, the French do not consider the franc as worth more than a half-cent American exchange, so I spent four hundred dollars in the four days of my leave. They have a big Finance Office in the *Place de l'Opera*, where prisoners of war can get partial allowance on their back pay. The place was crowded all day long with ex-Kriegies wanting more money, and the sergeant who made out my voucher was on the verge of hysterics:

"My achin' back, they're mad men!" he moaned. "What th' blistering hell do you *do* with all this money, you guys?"

Then he saw the fellow just back of me in line and screamed, "Are *you* back again?"

Evidently the RAMPS are going hog-wild. Everywhere I went there were Kriegies and the French are making fortunes. We buy everything in sight. It's been so long since I have had a chance to exchange money for possessions that I have lost all sense of values myself. The thought that you can exchange pieces of paper for nice-looking things is irresistible, and I did a lot of shopping in the afternoons: perfume, pipes, scarves, etc.

I wanted to stay on in Paris and had enough angles figured out so that I could eat and sleep all right, but I thought that perhaps my bunch might be ready to move out, so I came back to camp. Things are about the same, but several thousand more men have left and it shouldn't be too long before we go too, so I am going to stick close to the camp. After all, getting home

is the main attraction, and some of the men have been missing their groups and have consequently been put at the end of the list.

GHQ is even publishing appeals in the *Stars and Stripes*, "All RAMPS *please* return to your camps so that you may be shipped home to the States!" There are said to be 5,000 officers permanently AWOL from Lucky Strike alone; some of the ex-Kriegies don't seem to give a damn whether they get Stateside or not, but here's one who really wants to make that boat.

June 10, 1945 Our "packet" has been alerted for departure tomorrow morning at 4:00. There are only six or seven thousand left here now, and we will go out in a group of fifteen hundred. The Ninth and Third Armies are moving in as we move out, and they are going to use this camp as a shipping center themselves. They are slated for the Pacific after a furlough in the States.

Three of us made out passes for ourselves yesterday (sunk in wickedness, I am!), and went to Le Havre in an attempt to find out what ships were in harbor and whether we were going to leave soon, but we didn't have much luck. Le Havre is an awful mess, bombed repeatedly by the Eighth and Ninth, shelled by our warships, and fought through by our Army. Whole blocks have been leveled near the waterfront and the people are still mad.

So many threatening glances were cast at me that I took off my pilot's wings and pocketed them. I didn't have anything to do with bombing Le Havre and I refuse to be blamed for it; but they hate the Air Corps in general, just as the Jerries do. The French are very bumptious and excitable anyway. I can't find any depth in them at all, just noise and dramatic display. However, if there's any way to wring an extra centime out of you, they know it and take full advantage of the opportunity. I'm leaving a lot of my centimes behind but am glad

that I saw something of France. Now I'd like to look in on America.

June 12, 1945 We have finally put out to sea, after waiting in the harbor all night. England's cliffs just appeared for a short time, far to the north.

Yesterday we were aroused at 4:00 A.M. and then spent five hours waiting for the trucks that would take us to Le Havre. It seems that through someone's oversight they didn't even know they were supposed to come that morning, so we stood in the rain. The good old Army hasn't changed a bit!

We drove to the docks at Le Havre, threading a way past giant German pillboxes built along the shore, and boarded our ship, a Navy transport called the *General Butner*. I am down in the bottom hold, a highly unpleasant place. There is a two-thousand-man overload on board and fellows are sleeping in the passageways, on deck, on the hatches, everywhere.

I just saw Ralph Winslow, an old roommate of mine, and gave him one of the carved pipes I bought in Paris. He was kind to me in camp many times, giving me tobacco and cigarettes. Although generosity shown in a place like that prison can never be repaid, I am glad I could do something to show my gratitude.

June 19, 1945 According to the good word, we are docking tomorrow morning, and I trust that the scuttle-butt is correct. (Latrine-rumors have now, in proper nautical fashion, become "scuttle-butt") We have been on this same ocean for nine days, and I am tired of looking at it.

I slept out on deck the last two nights. The air is so foul and hot down in the hold that I can't sleep at all. Also, I keep imagining that we have hit something, or that a torpedo from one of the renegade German subs has hit us, and that's not conducive to slumber either. I can see that I was never meant to be a sailor, even though I haven't been sick at all. But as the passage has been smooth except for one thunderstorm, I haven't seen anyone sick, so that's nothing to boast about.

The worst feature of this voyage is the mess line, which stretches clear through the ship, down all the stairs, all around our compartment, and up some more stairs. When I get at the end of that line and start slowly winding my way through the vitals of this sea-going barracks, I get the queerest and most upsetting feeling of being trapped down there with no chance of escape. Then I start treading on the heels of the man in front of me and am cursed at. By this time everyone is cursing at everything.

Thank heaven I didn't join the Navy. One little sailor from Alabama whose acquaintance I have made is of the same mind. The CPO has him chipping paint all day long, and whenever I appear to talk to him, he leans wearily against the wall, pecking away with his hammer, and moans, "And Ah got fo' mo' yeahs of this!"

The crew had a gun practise this afternoon which effectively touched off my wobbly nerves again. When they start firing those anti-aircraft guns, it sounds as if the whole ship is going to come apart immediately. To my uninitiated ears, the flak was hitting us instead of going away from us. As the old Air Corps song goes, "I've had a belly-full of war."

Well, tomorrow we shall see that Golden Land! We are to land at Newport News, Virginia and go to Camp Patrick Henry to await shipment west. So I have made it after all—after all my hoping and giving up, praying and cussing, and after those eight months stolen from my life. God has been very good to me. Without His protection I would not be here now and I am humbly thankful. I hope that somehow my life may justify its being spared when so many others have lost theirs. There must be a reason why some go and some don't. I couldn't have been this *lucky*, merely lucky. My job now is to find out why I am still hanging around—and also to do a bit of just plain enjoying life. As I remember, the U.S.A. is a nice place!

. . . . AND SO IT ENDED

Well, that's that! It's done with and the days of waiting are over.

The fence is down, gashed and torn with a hole big enough to drive a truck through.

Now what? The expectations and the dreams have flattened like a pancake; they've gone up in smoke.

It's the end of the seventh day and the resting time is finished.

We begin the new day of a new week of a new life; we're out of the womb of stagnancy; we're out of the tomb of exile: we're free!

And time takes on a sharper cadence; the seconds and the minutes are shining with a newness that stuns the eyes.

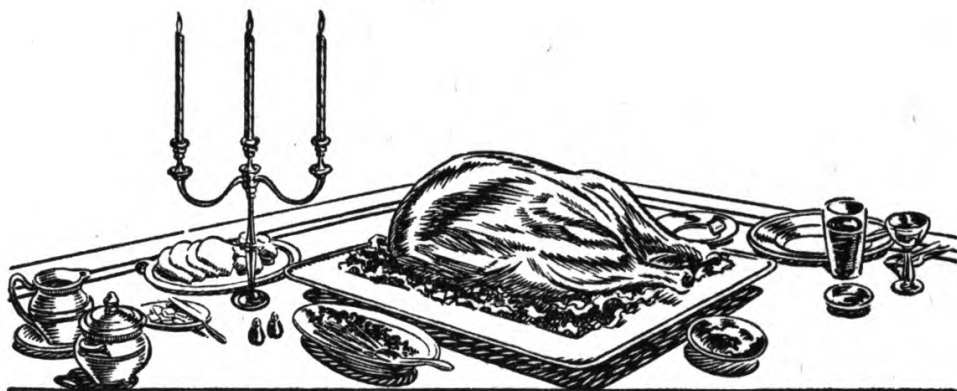
But the shoulders are hunched and the steps are slow; it takes a little while to get re-acquainted with Miss Freedom

When you haven't seen her for a long time.

Lt. John M. Coppinger

Part Three

LAST ENTRY



NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1946

As I sit here, the rain is falling outside, attacking the dirty snow drifts and driving them into the muddy ground; but I am warm and dry, in a comfortable room all of my own that I needn't share with anyone. A few hours ago the turkey and cranberry sauce and "fixin's" that go with an American New Year's dinner were on the table and I was indulging my appetite for as long a time as I wished, with no restrictions except those imposed by my own judgment. From the phonograph comes my favorite music. The war is over and I am home.

Last New Year's Day, also, it rained. Twenty of us, prisoners of war, sat around in our damp, drafty room in the barracks at Barth, Germany, thinking and talking disconsolately of the past and future, and trying to forget the ever-present emptiness of our stomachs, trying to forget that turkey with "fixin's" is the proper menu for a New Year's Day dinner, and not black bread and potatoes. I remember that in the afternoon Henry Kaczorowski and I walked in the drizzle over to Tom Davis' room to wish him a Happy New Year. That room too was full of men silently sitting in their worn, greasy clothing, resolutely ignoring the cold and hunger.

The main trouble with us was that the hunger we all felt went deeper than empty bellies, impossible to ignore. Look-

ing at them, you could no longer tell, but some of these men had been there for two years, and some for three. The fact that at that time I had been with them for only four months made no difference—a day was a lifetime. No, the trouble was that we were not free men. We were penned up like pigs, at the mercy of other factors than our own conscience and free will. Perhaps, when you come to think of it, we were the only Americans who knew exactly how the Poles and Czechs and French felt, and why it was that they fought so unceasingly to throw off their dictators. And I am sure we realized with a silent prayer of thanksgiving that our own nation had never, since its first freedom, been under the yoke of bondage, and that, with the help of God, it never would be.

As the hunger went on it became even more personal, much more than just a yearning for food. It went on to remind us of our homes and families, of the familiar streets of our home towns, of the things we knew were *there* right at the moment, of the friends and loves who were living that very second, and yet all so far away. Many times I found myself able to close my eyes and, by a concentration of imagination, take a mental journey home to see my family and friends living and moving in the old, well-loved surroundings, so removed from the bare existence that I was enduring.

Now the pendulum has swung. I am here, safely home again, and my memories take me back to dismal rows of ramshackle barracks within a barbed palisade, to a group of queerly-clad, emaciated, but quietly determined men. I suppose that those men, most of them, are now back in homes like this one of mine, warm and comfortable, looking back at last New Year's Day and smiling reminiscently. I wonder if many of them feel as I do, if the same questions are in their minds as in mine.

While we were prisoners, time seemed to stand still. Weary and disillusioned as we were, America was to us a land of dreams come true. Our old haunts and habits and pleasures seemed to be waiting for us in a state, so to speak, of suspended

animation. Of course we should have known that it really couldn't be that way.

When we finally got back home we found that a lot of things had changed. Most of all, when we came back there was forced upon us a realization that so many of our countrymen do not fully know, as we do, just how fortunate and blessed they are to have all the things they do have here in this land of freedom and opportunity. We realized that, after all, experience is the only real teacher and that while Americans may have the knowledge that in many respects they constitute the greatest nation on earth, that they are head and shoulders above the rest of the world in creature comforts, in material possessions, in technical achievement and advancement, still they are hesitant, dissatisfied, and full of complaints. It is hard for Europeans to understand this facet of American character, and it is hard also for us—ex-prisoners of war—to understand.

When I got back to the United States and had begun to settle down a bit after the high tension and excitement of traveling homeward and seeing again so many almost-forgotten people and places; as I began reading the newspapers and listening to the radio again, a slow amazement built itself up in my mind.

"What's the matter?" I asked myself wonderingly. "Don't people here in this country *know* that they are living in a world apart; that in every way they are eating better, living better than the rest of the world for many years can hope to do? Don't they appreciate the fact that if they were in Europe, instead of struggling to get the best seat in some movie house, they would be standing in line and fighting to buy an extra loaf of bread for their families? Instead of worrying about tires and new cars, over there they would simply be walking, never even thinking about owning a car of their own."

There might very well be an honest counting of blessings in these United States of America. There must be if we are to understand and work in harmony with the people of other nations, because our aims are entirely different. When we hear

the time-worn excuses European aggressors have given throughout the years, the oft-repeated assertion that the people need "more land and more food," the reaction of the average American seems to be:

"Ah-h, don't try to pull that old stuff—do you think we're dumb enough not to see through such a flimsy story as that?"

The stark truth is that they do need more land and more food. We here have heard so many times the statement that our country is "a land of plenty" that the phrase and the fact have lost their significance. The problem of mere existence has not troubled us since early colonial days. But in Europe it is quite otherwise. There the question is not "Can we afford a new car this year?" but "*Can we afford to live another year?*" And the needs of the less prosperous nations are so desperate that dictators will always, so long as no permanent remedy is applied, be able to obtain supremacy by promising the solution of this one question.

I can find only one answer to the way in which many of my countrymen seem to ignore this phase of the world situation—perhaps they don't *want* to know. They prefer to slide back into a day-by-day living, an unjustified optimism about the future, a hoping against reality; the sort of thing that prevailed before this bitter war began. Most of all, they don't feel like buckling down to the renewed endeavors that could quickly bring the lasting peace and security they, at present, vaguely hope will come about through some miracle of statesmanship. It appears to me that in all this they are shirking a God-given responsibility.

I have been back from Europe for only six months, and out of the Army for three, and already I can sense the numbing anaesthesia of living in entirely different and comfortable surroundings, and of simply having enough to eat. In thinking back to my life in a Nazi prison camp, I say to myself:

"Can that really have been me? Is it possible that things were really like that?"

It is growing a little difficult for me, even after being a part of the misery of Europe, to believe that such conditions actually exist and that any human being, in any part of the world, is forced to spend his days in hunger and physical discomfort. I know therefore that it is hard for people here in the United States to visualize, vicariously, the general want and poverty of less fortunate nations. But we, who are so bountifully supplied with material comforts, *must* come to such a realization, and be willing to share a little of these advantages we enjoy with those who have nothing.

Instead of searching and striving for new luxuries and new amusements, Americans had better resolve to turn their creative ability and their rich resources to making this whole world a place wherein the peace we want can settle permanently. Otherwise that abiding peace will never materialize.

Yes, I am wondering if other repatriated prisoners of war feel as I do. If they, too, wonder whether the personal worries we used to have about food, shelter and safety have merely been traded, now that we are home again, for doubts about the permanence of the victory we helped to bring and about the motives of those who pose as peacemakers.

If they do, those hundred thousand other ex-prisoners of war, then I am sure they find, as I do, that you can't think about it too long. They—and I—have been apprehensive and fearful too long, about too many things. The mind closes, ostrich-like, and I revel in the sheer pleasure of being back where I thought I would never be again, seeing faces I never hoped to see. God has been good and my trust in Him has become complete. Only through His help can the world be saved—may He have mercy on us all.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.

Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known My Name.

He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation.

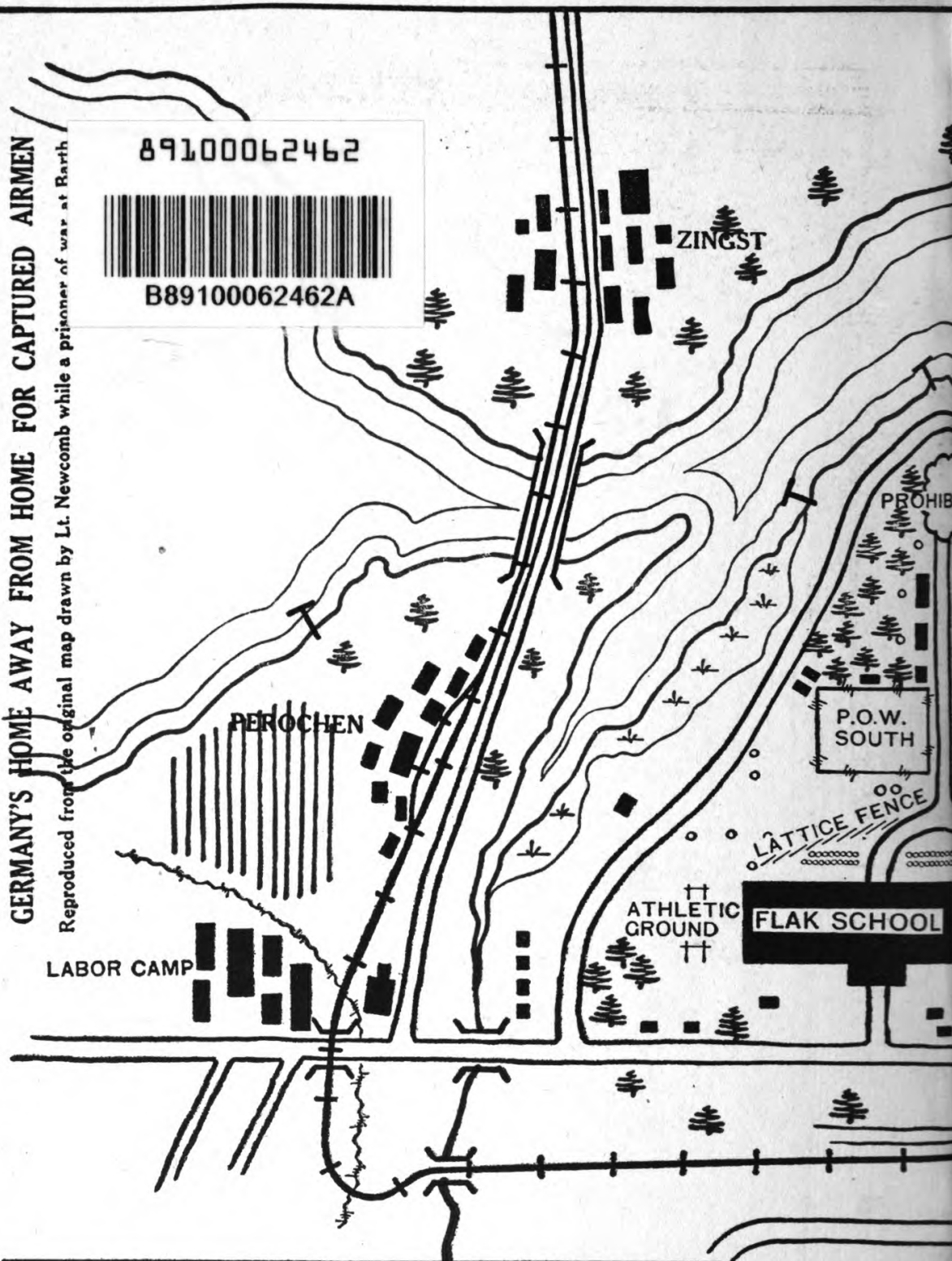
GERMANY'S HOME AWAY FROM HOME FOR CAPTURED AIRMEN

Reproduced from the original map drawn by Lt. Newcomb while a prisoner of war at Barth

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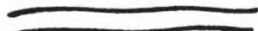


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LEGEND

ROADS



FOREST



WATER



GUN EMPLACEMENTS



WINDMILLS



MARSHES



WHARFS



RAILROADS

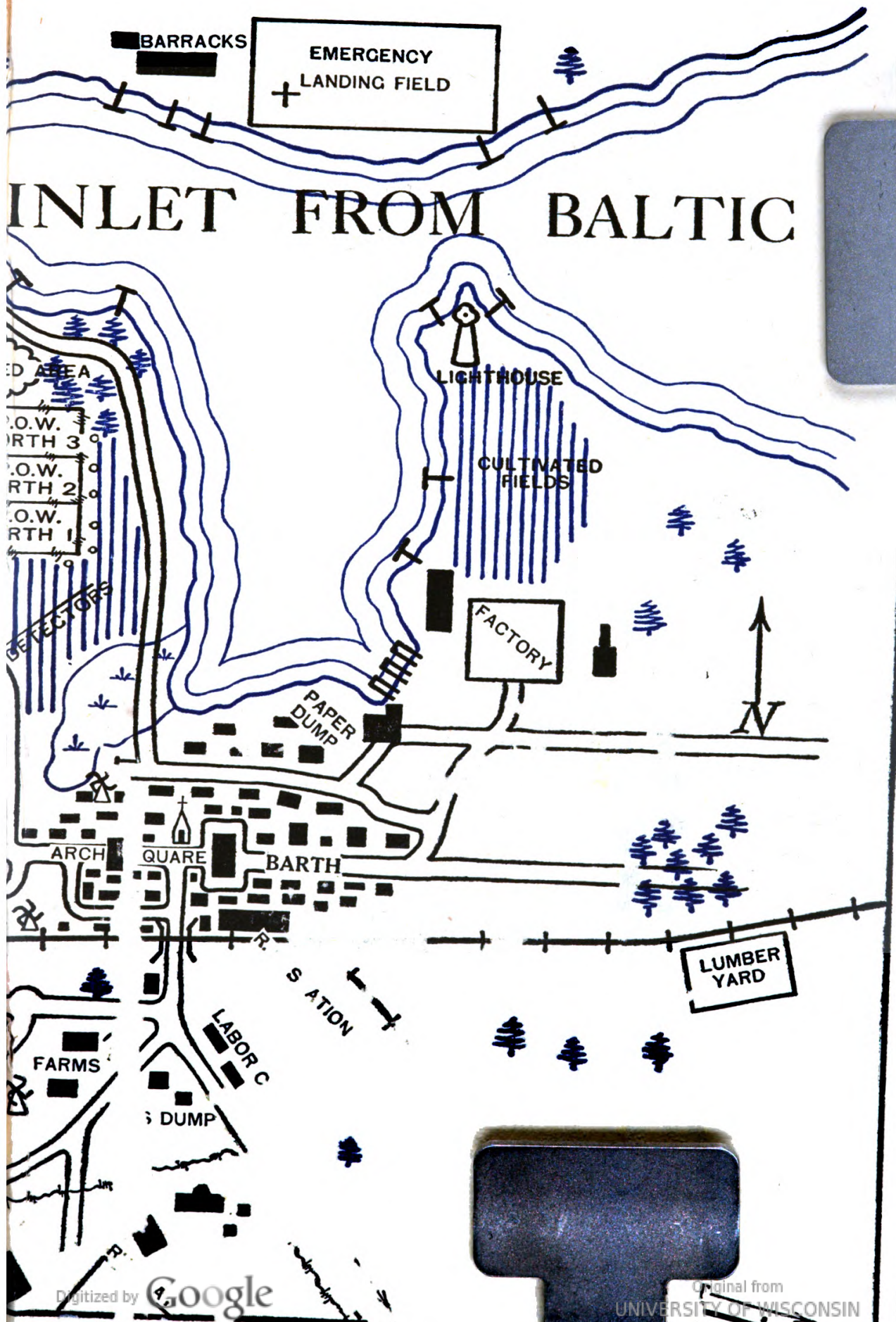


BRIDGES



BARBED WIRE





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